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Was there malicious triumph and merciless cruelty in that look?

TIGER DICK; OR THE CASHIER'S CRIME.

A TALE OF MAN'S HATE AND WOMAN'S FAITH.

BY PHILIP S. WARNE.

PART I: HAND AND GLOVE.

CHAPTER I.

FLORENCE GOLDTHORP'S LOVERS.

The slanting rays of the setting sun are falling in golden lines on a scene of rare enchantment. The horizon is bounded by a range of hills, their forest-plumed crests standing out in bold relief against the amber sky, and a purple haze stealing down their sides where they lie in shadow. Nearer, the broad Mississippi flashes back the sunlight from its bosom, and rising from its banks, the domes and spires of a city appear among the treetops. To our left flows a tributary stream, eager to mingle its waters with the parent flood.

Around us lies a garden of rare beauty. Our interest centers in the occupants of a vine-covered bower situated in its midst.

One is a girl in the first blush of her womanhood. Her hands rest in her lap, the fingers interlaced nervously. Her eyes have fallen until the long lashes sweep her cheek. There the color comes and goes with unwonted frequency.

Her companion is a man of some ten or a dozen years her senior, yet still possessed of the freshness and vigor of early manhood. He leans toward her, watching eagerly every changing expression of her countenance, while he speaks rapidly in a tone of pleading.

She raises her eyes to his face with a regret-

ful, compassionate look, and her lips part, as if about to speak.

"Not yet," he says; "do not interrupt me; hear me out. Oh, Florence! I would tell you how, when I first saw you, it was like a bursting of the sun from behind a cloud, illumining my life with a strange, new radiance. Mine had not been a very happy life; there had been more shadow in it than sunshine; but now all the dark past was forgotten in the new brightness that had come into it. It was such happiness to be near you; to catch your smile; to touch your hand. And yet it was so like some delightful dream, I trembled at the prospect of a rude awakening. Did you ever think what would be the emotions of one suddenly endowed with sight after a lifetime of blindness? Can you conceive the trembling, the misgivings with which the strange, new sense would be tried—the scarce belief in its reality, the shrinking dread of its sudden loss? Oh! how can I tell you of my love!—the alternations of hope and fear—the quick ecstasy, the unreasoning despair—the heaven and the hell, all in a moment! Florence! Florence! has it been a dream—only a dream? Oh! I dare not let you speak, even now. Dear one, you will not blast my hopes—you will not cast me back into the gloom, a thousand times intensified by this momentary brightness? Say, not that you love me now, but that I may hope!"

The girl raised her hand to interrupt the rapid flow of his words, and began:

"Mr. Beaumont, I cannot express to you the pain, the regret, with which—"

"No, no—not that!" he cried, a spasm of agony convulsing his features. "Oh, Florence! you cannot—you cannot—What can I say to you—how can I tell you? Oh! if you only knew you would not have the heart! I love you! I love you! Pity me! You are all that I have in the world! Your love is my only hope!"

He clung to her hands, as if indeed to a last hope, and lifted to her view a face ghastly in its despair, while his breast labored with great sobs. Sympathetic tears trickled down her cheeks at the utter abandon of the man.

"Calm yourself," she said, soothingly, placing her hand on his shoulder with an almost motherly pity. "Believe me, my heart bleeds for you. It pains me more than I can tell that I should be the unwitting cause of your misery. I would do anything I could to relieve it."

"Then do not reject me entirely. Give me time. Give me an opportunity to win your love. I shall worship you. My passion will constrain a response for very sympathy. Only let me show you how I can love, how I do love you."

She shook her head.

"I shall always regard you as a very dear friend—as one who has my highest esteem."

"Conventionalities all!" he cried, with heat.

"Do not torture me with meaningless phrases. How ready you are to give that for which I do not ask, and withhold the thing my soul craves! Oh, Florence! may you never know the agony of a moment like this!"

"You have my friendship; I cannot give you more," she said, still gently.

He had let his head fall upon his arm. He now raised it with a sardonic laugh.

"No," he said; "I suppose it is no longer within your control."

She started back with a hurt, not angry, expression.

"Mr. Beaumont!"

"What's the use of glossing over matters?" he cried, recklessly. "No doubt Mr. Frederick Powell, my successful rival—"

Now she arose without a word, anger flashing in her eye and glowing in her cheek, and a tremor of indignation and wounded delicacy running through her frame.

"Ah! that touches the quick!" pursued Beaumont, white with jealous rage. "I wish him joy of his triumph."

If Florence would have deigned a reply, it was cut short by a crunching step in the gravel walk.

"Speak of angels, and you will hear the rustle of their wings," said Beaumont, with bitter irony; and added, taking his hat and bowing with mock courtesy: "I beg that you will not allow me to interfere with your coming *tete-a-tete*. Let me bid you good-evening."

And he was gone.

A moment Florence vacillated between conflicting emotions, and then, taking another path, she disappeared amid the shrubbery in the direction of the house.

The arched had been empty scarcely a moment when it was entered by the man whose approach had interrupted the stormy scene just enacted within it.

"I surely heard voices," he said, with a look of surprise.

Then his glance fell upon a little volume bound in green and gold, lying on the rustic center-table. A look of tenderness came into his eyes as he picked it up and turned over its leaves. It was open at the sad tale of Zelia, in that sweetest, saddest of lovers' songs, Lalla Rookh.

"Dear girl!" whispered the young man, referring to the absent reader, not to the ill-starred heroine of the poem.

He touched his lips to the leaves, where they had felt the pressure of the fingers he loved so well. And then, as thousands of lovers have done and thousands more will do again, he glanced around with a foolish expression, as if he had feared that some prying eye had detected the silly act.

Entering the house, he placed himself at the piano, and after an airy prelude, began to sing:

"Oh, where dost thou linger
My sweet, pretty maid?
I wait for thy coming
Alone in the glade.
The sound of thy footstep
Falls not on my ear;
The moments that hold thee
Are burdened with fear—
The heavy-winged moments are burdened with fear."

He paused a moment in expectancy. From the conservatory came a response, in clear, bell-like tones:

"Ah! well may the moments
Be heavy with fear;
Unconscious thou waitest
With death lurking near.
Its shadow envelops
The trust-keeping glade:
Oh, ne'er shalt thou linger
Again for thy maid—
No, nevermore, nevermore wait for thy maid!"

"Talk of romance!" laughed Fred Powell, entering the conservatory as she ceased singing.

Florence stood blushing and smiling, as he approached. In her heart there was a shadow of compunction that she could be so happy, when scarcely a moment before a fellow creature had left her side in such wretchedness. Then came the question, had Fred overheard Beaumont's jealous accusation? and she gazed timidly into his face, to see if she could detect anything confirmatory of the fear; but the frankness of his manner relieved her anxiety, when he added, with a shrug and a grimace:

"But don't you predict a very lugubrious termination to my vigil?"

"Oh, you know we have got past the days of inspiration, and perhaps I am not a true prophetess," she said, shyly pinning a knot of flowers in his buttonhole.

"I hope not—at least, in this case," he replied, and taking her arm, led her out into the garden.

The last iris tints of sunset were fading out of the west, and from a sky of deepest azure the moon threw her tranquilizing light over the scene.

Fred and Florence strolled down the garden path to the arbor. The volume lying on the center-table gave direction to their conversation, and, whether influenced by the time, the subject, or by the unconscious attraction of their hearts, their words took a tender tone. Then, with her hands in his and his eyes on her face, Fred asked:

"May I be Peramor, and will you be my Lalla Rookh?"

"What in the world should we do for a Fadlaaden?" laughed Florence, pretending not to see the drift of his words, though her cheeks were as red as roses and her eyes flashed like diamonds.

"Rather Fadlaaden!" replied her lover. "I should want a less carping critic than he. Would you be as partial as the princess?"

"Could you sing as well as the princess?" asked Florence, still evading him.

"My song would draw its inspiration from the same source—my love for you, darling!" he replied, letting his arm go round her in a tremulous embrace. "Now will you be my Lalla Rookh; or, better still, will you be my wife?"

Her heart beat against his, her lips touched his neck, as she replied:

"If you are quite sure that you are the true prince, I guess I shall have to say—yes!"

And so was told the old, old story that is ever new.

That evening, when they were exchanging their last words of leave-taking at the gate, Florence clung to his arm with a shade of anxiety in her eyes, as if she were loth to let him go.

"What is it, Flo?" he asked, looking questioningly into her face.

"Nothing—nothing," she replied, glancing wistfully down the moonlit road.

Suddenly, something in the expression of Cecil Beaumont's face, when he left her, appeared before her mind. But, casting aside the vague apprehension, she smiled a farewell to her lover. He bent over her a moment, and was gone, leaving her cheeks a vivid crimson.

Two hours before, the same road had been traversed by Cecil Beaumont; but in a far different mood from that in which Fred Powell now stepped briskly over the ground. The latter went with head erect, chest expanded and limbs swinging free, with a sense of buoyancy and happiness; the head of the former was bowed, his teeth set and hands clenched.

Approaching his boarding-place, Cecil found that Mrs. McPherson was away from home. He passed on into the garden back of the house. Striding back and forth under the trees, he gave vent to his rage and disappointment.

"The only woman I ever loved," he muttered between his teeth, "and to be deprived of her! Then here is this silly fool, May Powell, languishing in my arms. Curse her! her only recommendation is her money."

"It is thus that the world ever mocks us, thrusting into our laps that for which we care nothing—at which we sicken with disgust—and holding just beyond our grasp that for which we hunger with all the power of passion. Oh, a grand thing is this life! Ha! ha!" laughing bitterly; "how thankful we should be to Providence for its many blessings!"

"But to be beaten by that idiot—that jack-anapes, with money in the place of brains—that coxcomb, without an idea beyond the set of his necktie, or the part of his hair! What can she see in him? Oh, curse him! I should like to pitch him neck and heels into a horse-pond!"

"But he shall never marry her—I swear it! I'll kill him first!"

He ground his teeth in a transport of rage, and smote his breast with his clenched hand. Then, with a sudden revolution of feeling, he covered his face with his hands and groaned:

"Oh, Florence! Florence! I love you so! I would give my life for one smile, one pressure of your hand in affection!"

Then changing as suddenly:

"Pugh! I'm a fool! I have the game in my own hands. I'll make him an outcast. She shall blush at the sight of him. The fool is among that class who call themselves 'moderate drinkers'; they 'take a glass now and then, for the sake of good-fellowship.' The idiots think that they can play with the fires of hell and come away unscathed. Ha! ha! I have tried that myself. Experience is a thorough teacher, and brings bitter conviction!"

Thus he railed on, forgetful of everything but his meditated revenge. Mrs. McPherson, on his return home, heard him from her window, and caught the drift of his wild ravings. After he had entered the house and gone up to his room, she heard him pacing backward and forward across the floor, still hurling imprecations at his rival.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNWELCOME ENCOUNTER.

CECIL BEAUMONT sat at his desk, in the bank of which he was cashier. It was five o'clock, and he had the bank all to himself. Before him lay a telegram, and spread out be-

neath it a Chicago paper, folded down to the grain reports.

Cecil's head rested on his hands, his elbows on the desk. His eyes were fixed, not on the telegram, but away beyond it on vacancy. A painful frown indented his brow, and there was a look of weariness and discouragement on his face.

"It's of no use," he muttered, half aloud; "it's like pouring water upon sand. If I put any more money into this infernal speculation, it will be sunk along with the rest, instead of saving it. Luck is dead against me; that's certain. When I put my hand into it, wheat goes down and corn comes up. Well, let it go. I'm tired of this life, anyway. The sooner it's over, the better. We wrangle over the things of the world like a pack of fools; but, sooner or later, we all accept the conclusion that the game isn't worth the candle, I'm of opinion. Well, let the rest fight it out among them; I shan't take another hand."

He dropped his head upon his arms in utter weariness. There was a sensation of constriction in his breast and a choking pain in his throat, while the feeling of hopeless disappointment and exhaustion forced seething tears into his eyes. It was no one thing that weighed him down, but the accumulated failures and rebuffs of a lifetime, crowned by rejection at the hands of the woman he loved, and the prospect of soon being branded with infamy.

In his haste to become rich, Cecil Beaumont had entered that maelstrom of gambling which in the Western metropolis takes the place of Wall street. At first, the sagacity or good fortune of his agent yielded him promising returns. Afterward came reverses that swept away all of the means at his command. But he received advice that the "corner" must yield in a few days, and if his investment were now bolstered up by a couple of thousands, they might weather the storm. Then Cecil yielded to the temptation to appropriate funds which were his only in trust.

Again and again had his hands gone into the coffers of his employers, in the desperate effort to retrieve what he had lost; and now he found himself a defaulter to the amount of several thousand dollars, and the cry was still for more.

"I'll give up the struggle; I've had enough of it," he said, bitterly, as his mind passed his life in review. "I tried to wrest enjoyment from Fate, and she laughed at me when the golden apples turned to ashes on my lips. Then I resolved to propitiate her by what the world calls honest living, and I have my labor for my pains. The one thing I crave is lost to me, and the rest might as well go with it."

"Oh, perdition!" he cried, springing to his feet and striding fiercely up and down; "I'll put a bullet through my brain, and end it all! I should be benefiting society, at least," he added, laughing bitterly.

"But no," he continued, with a sudden rigidity of the muscles, "if I cannot win the game myself, it shall not be my fault if it is not a drawn battle. I can starve off detection until I have dragged him in the mire; for, by the fiend! he shall never have her!"

"And if, while I am tramping him under foot, Fortune should yield to my desperation what she has hitherto denied!—ah! that were a stake! With him out of my way, and myself clear of this accursed scrape, what may not be affected? Money!—bah! I'd pour it like water to secure such an end! Ay, I'd dip my hands in blood, to win her for my own!"

He strode up and down in wild exhilaration of hope, running his fingers excitedly through his hair. But the fit burned itself out the quicker because of its intensity; and he again threw himself despondently into a chair.

"Bah! what a fool I am! If I sink him to perdition, she is just the sort of a woman to follow the man she loves to the veriest depths. And if he were dead she cares nothing for me—she never will. It is cold comfort seeking only revenge—living only to thwart another man."

While he was yet struggling with his emotions, a carriage drove up to the private entrance of the bank; a lady alighted, ran up the steps, and in a moment was in his presence.

"Cecil! Are you alone?" she asked, advancing with a bright smile.

"All alone, as you see. Are you looking for your father? He had a business appointment immediately after banking-hours."

"But I'm not looking for papa."

"For Fred?" asked Cecil, striving to appear natural, and reaching for a paper on the floor, to hide the repugnance with which he uttered the name. "He went out soon after four."

"But I am not looking for Fred either."

"No?"

"No!"

She repeated the word after him sharply, with a pretty show of coquettish impatience. Cecil looked up at her inquiringly.

"Is there no one but papa and Fred whom I might call upon—old Dawson, the attorney, for instance? But why are you looking so troubled and worn, Cecil?" she asked, a little shyly, with a sudden shade of anxiety in her eyes.

"Troubled—am I?"

"Why, yes. You don't look well, at all; and you haven't seemed yourself for several days."

"I suppose we must lay it to business," he replied, trying to smile. But the attempt was a failure, and died out in the old look of weariness.

May Powell placed her hand on Cecil's shoulder, and looked even more anxiously into his face.

"What is it, Cecil?" she asked. "Won't you tell me what troubles you?"

"I suppose we all have the blue-devils sometimes, don't we?" he replied, evasively; and added, with bitterness: "No doubt it is very uncomplimentary to let you see that your presence has not altogether banished them."

"Cecil, take me into your confidence. Let me share your anxieties with you. Somehow I feel that it is no trivial cause that moves you so."

There was loving tenderness in her pleading tones; and her humid eyes told how her heart yearned toward him.

Cecil avoided her gaze, as he replied, with a shudder:

"Men are every day called to bear burdens that would be ill-suited to the delicate shoulders of woman."

"There is no cross so grievous that I would not joyously help you to bear it, Cecil. It shall be the one happiness of my life to lighten your burdens."

There came into Cecil Beaumont's heart something like a glow of gratitude for this great devotion, and perhaps a slight twinge of remorse, at the thought how poorly he requited it.

"May," he said, gently, taking her hand between both of his, "I believe that you love me very dearly, little girl."

She clung convulsively to his hands, tears welled into her eyes, and she trembled from head to foot with the unutterable emotion that swayed her.

"Oh, Cecil! So dearly—so dearly! If I could only tell you!"

And, letting an arm glide around his neck, she felt to weeping on his breast.

Who could remain insensible to such a passion? Cecil Beaumont, world-worn man as he was, felt his heart softened by her words and tears. It was as if with disappointed ambition and baffled pride; it ached beneath its load of selfishness and sin; and now her pure tears fell upon it like cooling balm. Footsore on the dusty highway of life, her love was to him a shadowy retreat by the wayside, her heart a pure spring where he might lave his parched lips.

He took off her hat and placed it on the desk before him. Then, drawing her head upon his shoulder, he brushed the hair back from her temples and kissed her tenderly.

"May," he said, "I never before realized the depth, the fervor of your love. It is more than I deserve."

"No, no, Cecil; not more than you deserve; but all that my poor heart can generate. Oh, Cecil! do you know?—I never was so happy in all my life!"

And she shrunk closer in his arms with a little tremor of ecstasy.

"Who could help loving you, my darling?" he whispered; and, for the time, Florence Goldthorp faded from his mind, and all the sin and misery of his life was forgotten in a moment of perfect happiness.

The minutes sped by unobserved, while they sat thus, and May was startled by the clock on the mantle-piece tinkling half after five. She sprang to her feet with a bright blush.

"Mercy! I believe I almost forgot my errand," she said, laughing.

"Let me see—you called for the janitor?" asked Cecil, slyly.

"Impudence!" laughed May, stamping her foot. "No, sir, I called upon so insignificant a person as the cashier, to give him a little turn in my phetion, and then take him home to dinner with me."

"The cashier thinks you an angel, and believes himself especially favored of the gods." May tripped away to a washstand, and began to remove the traces of her recent tears.

"I am afraid that the cashier has made me look more like a fright than an angel," she said, brushing the glossy hair back from her forehead.

"A very pretty fright," said Cecil, gazing at her admiringly, as she put on her hat, "one that Venus might envy, I fancy."

"No compliments between you and me, Cecil," she said, earnestly, with her hand on his arm. "We love each other too sincerely for exaggeration."

Cecil winced a little at this; but he kissed her, and they passed out and entered the carriage.

More than one eye lighted up with admiration, as May Powell swept past in the pony-phetion; and more than one observer mentally pronounced Cecil Beaumont a lucky fellow. May's eyes sparkled and her cheeks glowed with pleasurable excitement. She was secure in the love of the man she had enshrined in her heart. For the time her bosom was pervaded by a sense of perfect content and peace.

For half an hour they drove on the avenue, and then turned the horses' heads toward Mr. Powell's residence, situated just far enough out of town to be beyond the dust and bustle.

Passing through the business center, they were stopped on a crossing by an entanglement of vehicles in the crowded thoroughfare. May was chatting gayly, when her attention was attracted by a pedestrian who appeared at the side of the carriage.

The man was tall and slim in build, with regular, clean-cut features, and a long, drooping, jet-black mustache. His dress was perplexing. In speckless broadcloth, polished boots, gold-headed cane and kid, he was faultless. It was the black neckcloth, with narrow yellow bars, ornamented by a sparkling diamond, and the white hat, with a band of crape three or four inches wide, tilted slightly on one side, that drew a second glance.

At sight of Cecil, he started and took a step forward, with a look of recognition and parted lips, as if about to speak.

"Does this gentleman know you?" asked May, in an undertone, laying her hand on Cecil's arm.

Cecil turned. The stranger raised his hat, with a marked bow, and a smile that showed his even white teeth, in striking contrast with his black mustache.

May could scarcely repress a shudder. Was there malicious triumph and merciless cruelty in that look; or was it only the surprise of the peculiarity in the Kentuckian's smile?

As for Cecil, he seemed stupefied by some overpowering emotion. The color fled his cheeks, his lips quivered, and a cold sweat started on his brow. Grasping the back of the carriage with a hand that shook as with palsy, he gazed upon the stranger with eyes in which incredulity struggled with amazement and terror.

The stranger arched his eyebrows slightly; smiled again, as he replaced his hat; and complacently drew his mustache through his fingers, first one side and then the other.

The phetion moved on. The spell was broken. Cecil turned with a long-drawn breath and hastily took the lines from May's hands. He quickly extricated himself from the throng of vehicles; and then applying the whip, went dashing along the streets, turning this way and that and doubling on his course, as if to evade pursuit.

May gazed upon him in utter bewilderment.

Why did he tremble so? What gave him that wild look of abject terror?

"Cecil! Cecil! what is the matter?" she asked, in a voice hushed with affright.

But he did not heed her; he seemed to have forgotten her existence.

It was not until they had reached the outskirts of the town, in the direction of her father's house, by a very circuitous route, that he seemed to breathe more freely.

Then he turned toward her, and, as he wiped the sweat from his brow, said:

"May, you will excuse me from attending you at dinner. It will be impossible for me to be present this evening. Bear my apologies to your father; but, as you love me, make no reference to what has happened. You will pardon me, if I ask you to set me down now and drive home alone."

He seemed so humbled, so cowed, that May's heart bled with anguish as she looked at him.

She clung to his arm, sobbing hysterically:

"Cecil! for God's sake, what is the matter? Confide in me. Who is that terrible man?"

"Not now. Do not ask me," he said, hurriedly; and then, seeing the agony and suspense in her face, he caught her hand, and said, with a quivering lip: "May, you have loved me, I never knew how well until to-day. In all the dreary waste of my life this is the one bright spot."

And then, with a choking voice:

"When you learn my unworthiness, don't hate me utterly. And now, good-by. Remember, you are to say nothing to-night. Once more, God bless you!"

He caught her in his arms and kissed her, while a hot tear fell on her cheek. Then he leaped from the carriage, and walked rapidly toward the city.

May gazed after him, spell-bound, for a moment. Then she caught up the lines with trembling hands, turned the dapple grays, and followed him.

"Cecil! Cecil! one word!" she cried, breathlessly, leaning out of the carriage.

He turned and spoke, almost fiercely:

"Well?"

"What is about to happen? Where are you going? Oh, come with me. You will be safer there. Don't go back to that dreadful city."

"May, you don't know what you are talking about. It is impossible for me to go to Riverside to-night. Don't be put about by my foolishness a moment ago. Your fears for me are groundless, I assure you."

She leaned out of the carriage and caught him about the neck.

"Oh, my darling!" she cried, "don't leave me. Let me go with you. I shall die of fear and suspense. I know that some terrible danger threatens you. Cecil—dear Cecil—I can't part with you!"

"May," he said, disengaging her arms, "this is childish. I can not explain to you now; but there is danger only in your imagination. Now let me go. Longer detention may be a serious embarrassment to me. Keep a brave heart, my love, until we meet again."

He waved his hand and smiled with an attempt at gayety; but the smile was only a sardonic contortion of the features, and the hollow mockery of cheerfulness in his voice wrung her heart and blinded her with tears.

"Cecil," she said, making the grays keep pace with him, "when shall we meet again?"

"To-morrow," he replied, jerking out the word with an evident effort!

"Surely?"

"Without fail."

She stopped her horses, and watched him as he went down the road. The tears gathered in her eyes so fast that she could scarcely distinguish him. Then a bend in the road hid him entirely from view, and with a great sob, she turned her horses homeward.

CHAPTER III. RAFFLED FLIGHT.

CECIL BEAUMONT walked rapidly cityward. He had the appearance of a man fleeing some haunting specter. His bloodless lips twitched nervously; his fear-distended eyes wandered from side to side, as if in dread of some lurking foe.

"Again!" he muttered, beneath his breath. "This is the shadow that is to envelop my whole life. I thought I succeeded in throwing him off the scent, on that fearful night in New York, when I first discovered that he was not dead. And yet this is what I have feared. I have lived in sleepless dread of his appearance to drag me down to death and infamy. It has haunted my life, and turned every pleasure to gall and bitterness."

"I resolved to leave the old ways of sin and to redeem the past by a life of temperance and usefulness. Bah! it is a foolish hope. This fiend is my Nemesis. He will dog my foot steps to a grave of shame, blighting every good purpose, blasting every aspiration; goading me to desperation and the gallows; making me a fit companion for himself!"

"Well, I have struggled; I have tried to lead a better life; I have tried to shake him off and he has followed me. But let him look to himself! He must not goad me too far. I shall not always flee him. Let him look to himself!"

His hands were clenched, his eyes blazing, his lips set with desperate resolve. And yet he shivered with dread, as he slunk cautiously through obscure streets, until he gained his boarding-place.

Once within his room, he threw himself into a chair, in the abandon of utter helplessness.

"What can I do?" he muttered; "I can not stay here. A whisper, a breath, a shadow of suspicion—then investigation of my accounts, detection, infamy, a prison, and, if he wills it, the gallows!"

Cecil Beaumont buried his face in his hands and shuddered. Then his mind was crossed by a vision of himself in chains before the amazed and horrified Florence Goldthorp, and he groaned aloud.

"Oh, God! what a price for paltry gold—for a moment of insane pleasure! To forfeit the comforts of a home, the esteem of friends, to become an object of loathing to the only woman I love—and for what?"

Cecil Beaumont arose and paced back and forth, his fingers working nervously, his lips tremulous, and his eyes roving restlessly from side to side.

"Only his life stands between me and security!" he whispered, hoarsely. "Nay, it is his life against mine. Even the deer will fight when brought to bay. Curse him! I have fled from him as from an avenging spirit; but he must not press me too hard. When the finger of scorn is turned against me, he shall not be alive to gloat over his work."

Cecil crossed the room and took from a drawer a highly-polished, silver-mounted revolver. He examined it to see that all the chambers were loaded, and then placed it in a breast-pocket.

"He had better not cross my path," he muttered, fiercely. "He will find me a desperate man, ready to cast all on a single die."

He continued to pace the room, but in one of his turns the window was momentarily darkened. In the gathering twilight he detected a swarthy face, a pair of piercing black eyes, beneath brows that formed a straight line, and a drooping mustache, as black as a raven's wing. As he looked, the mustache was elevated in a smile of fiendish triumph and cruelty, revealing beneath it a line of white teeth. Then the face disappeared like a phantom.

Cecil Beaumont sunk into a chair with chattering teeth and wild-staring eyes. The apparition had been so sudden that the shock unnerved him.

Quailing, he sat staring at the window, until the light of the departing day died out and left him in utter darkness. Then he arose, with nervous haste.

"I can not stay here," he muttered. "It is waiting for the noose to fall about my neck. With that devil to torture me, I should go mad."

He collected a few things in a sachel, and meeting his landlady as he passed out, said: "Don't look for me for two or three days, Mrs. McPherson; I shall be out of town, adding to myself, as he stepped on the sidewalk: 'Give me two or three days' start, and then follow who can. It won't be the first time I've played hide and seek.'"

"Haighserse!" sighed the good-hearted woman he left watching him from the doorway; "he's clean broke down with trouble and sorrow. Weel, weel, there's mair than ane braw laddy that's gane sare of heart at being scorned by a lassie nae sae bonny as Miss Goldthorp."

Fearing warily about him as he advanced, Cecil kept the dark side of the street as much as possible, slouching his hat over his eyes and pulling up the collar of his coat, when he passed under gaslights.

He gained the bank, feeling sure that no one had dogged his footsteps.

He drank several glasses of wine to fortify his flagging energies; then bathed his face in cold water and rubbed it briskly with a coarse towel, to destroy the ghastliness that, reflected in the mirror, made him shudder.

Then he stepped out onto the street and went to the telegraph office. Passing behind the counter, he sat down at the table of the operator, with whom he was acquainted; and while chatting with him (for the wine had given him a sort of reckless ease), began to write on a blank. Then remarking that perhaps he had better wait until morning, he tore up the blank and passed out of the office.

Returning to the bank, Cecil drew from his pocket several blanks that he had secured while the operator's attention was distracted for a moment. Taking down a file of telegrams, he began to imitate the operator's writing. He soon produced what would pass muster with one far more critical than Mr. Powell was likely to be. It read:

"Come immediately. Father cannot live twenty-four hours."
CHAS. BEAUMONT.

Cecil inclosed this in a letter in his own handwriting, which ran:

"My dear Mr. Powell, you will see by the inclosed telegram that I am unexpectedly called away. You may look for me day after to-morrow, if nothing unexpected happens, etc."

Having thus taken precautions against suspicion at his sudden departure, until he should have gained at least two or three days' time, he supplied himself with money and was again in the street.

It was with considerable trepidation that Cecil entered the broad light at the depot, but his case was a desperate one, and called for bold action. He might escape detection amid the crowd, if any one was on the watch for him.

His hand was on the door, when, looking through the glass, he discovered his evil genius standing at the ticket-office, carelessly switching the leg of his pantaloons with a light cane. As he turned to make some laughing remark to the ticket agent, his mustache went up displaying his white teeth.

The earth seemed sinking beneath Cecil Beaumont's feet. He clung to the door a moment to steady himself. Then, with a shudder, he turned away, and staggered toward the waiting train.

Cowering beneath the glance of every stranger, fearing every moment that a heavy hand would fall upon his shoulders, he elbowed his way through the crowd. But no detaining hand disputed his passage, and he stepped upon the car-platform with a wild sense of elation at his narrow escape.

He clutched the door-knob with feverish haste, but stood rooted on the threshold. As he was about to enter, the door at the opposite end of the car opened, and in swaggared the man whom of all men he dreaded most.

The stranger moved carelessly down the aisle, tapping the head of his cane against his lips, and eying the passengers on either side, approaching the verge of rudeness where it happened to be a pretty woman.

Was it skillful maneuvering or chance that threw this man in his pathway at every turn. His actions seemed so natural and unpremeditated, he seemed so oblivious to the proximity of any one in whom he had a special interest, that Cecil felt the chill of superstition creep over him. Was this man unconsciously impelled by some unseen destiny to place himself in the way, so as to thwart the efforts of his victim to escape?

Blind with terror, Cecil turned and groped his way through the crowd. Hailing a cab, he mounted beside the driver, and thrusting a ten-dollar bill into his hand, requested to be allowed to drive. Then getting out of the main thoroughfare he applied the whip, and drove rapidly through the city in every direction, repeating the maneuver of the afternoon.

After twenty minutes, in which he had taken long stretches in quiet streets, to assure himself that he was not followed, he restored the lines to the driver, and leaped to the ground.

"Gads!" muttered the cabman, chuckling over his good fortune, "that gent's a Dick Turpin, 'e is! 'Tain't hevery night, in this 'ere blasted country, has a gentleman takes it into 'is 'ead to 'ave a pleasure ride, regardless 'of expense. Hif that there cove was a-dodging 'of the perlice, w'y, 'of course, 'is was too busy a-touting 'of my money to notice it—he!"

A rapid walk soon brought Cecil to the levee. A down-river boat was making rapid preparations for departure. Slouching his hat over his eyes and drawing up his coat-collar, he made his way, among the hurrying roustabouts, across the gang-plank, and mounted the stairs to the cabin deck. He was about to enter the saloon, when a sight met his gaze that sent the blood rushing back on his heart.

Crosslegged and with a cigar between his lips sat a man, reading the evening paper. He removed his cigar and smiled apparently at something he was reading; and beneath his raven mustache appeared his glittering white teeth.

With a groan, Cecil reeled backward, falling against a man who had ascended the stairs just behind him.

"Hey, there! What the devil! Are you going to knock me down-stairs?" demanded the man, roughly. He was a coarse, brutal-looking fellow, with bushy whiskers and eyes bloodshot with unbridled excess.

"I beg your pardon, sir—I beg your pardon!" said Cecil, in an humble, propitiatory tone.

Then, with trembling knees and sinking heart, he descended the stairs, recrossed the gang-plank, and fled back into the city.

"It's no use!" he muttered, wildly, to himself. "I am confronted at every turn. That demon will hunt me to earth. I feel it."

Glancing nervously about, he saw a man about half a block behind him. It was a quiet street, and there was no one else so near. Something in his appearance made Cecil shudder.

He turned a corner, and listened and watched as he passed hurriedly on. He heard foot steps behind him, but they were on the opposite side of the street. He hastened; they quickened. He lessened his pace; they were retarded.

With a cold sweat on his brow, Cecil hurriedly turned a corner and stepped into a doorway. With bated breath he listened. The sound of foot steps had ceased. He waited—five—ten—fifteen minutes. Save a couple of young "bloods," on their way to some place of nightly carousal, no one appeared.

Cecil stole forth and crept down the street. Was it a shadow that he saw gliding along in the gloom on the opposite side of the street? Again he turned a corner and ran with all his might. Stopping suddenly, he was sure he heard the muffled footsteps of some one running in the road; but they stopped as soon as he did.

Cecil sought a business street, in the hope of escaping amid the crowd. Turning, after he had passed under a gaslight, he beheld only a few paces behind him, the man against whom he had run on the steamboat. Then hope forsok him, and chilled and benumbed with fear, he gave up the struggle.

He went to the bank and destroyed the letter and telegram, and then started wearily homeward. As he drew near the house, he felt that he was no longer followed; but he experienced no surprise at it; it only showed how secure his enemies felt, and how hopeless would be any further attempt to escape.

As he let himself in with a night-key, Mrs. McPherson appeared at the head of the stairs with a lamp in her hand, and a startled expression on her face.

"Oh! be it you, Mr. Beaumont?" she exclaimed, visibly relieved. "There's a letter left for you nae mair than twa minutes gone. It be lying on the table."

Cecil said something about having changed his mind with regard to his projected journey, and passed on into his room.

For a long time he sat without opening his letter, dreading to touch it, knowing that it contained his doom. Then, with desperate energy, he broke the seal. It read:

"MY MAGNANIMOUS FRIEND:—By the time you receive this epistle, you will have made up your mind that my gratitude will brook no further delay in the hope that it has long cherished, of an opportunity to express to you the obligations I am under, for those services in the past which you so generously ignored. Believe me, sir, I am too much indebted to you to allow myself to be cheated of the satisfaction of making such poor acknowledgment as lies in my power. I resolve my friends at 149 River street, and I know that you will not deny me the pleasure of giving you the place of honor beneath my humble roof, at half-past ten o'clock this evening."

No signature—there was need of none. Cecil Beaumont dropped his livid face into his hands and groaned aloud.

(To be continued.)

RED ROB.

The Boy Road-Agent.

BY OLL COOMES,
AUTHOR OF "DAKOTA DAN," "BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HERRICANE," "HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII. THE MEXICAN BAILE.

OCTAVIA was highly pleased over her prospect of going to the *baile*, and yet she was seriously impressed by the revelation of the negroes concerning the secret of her life. She thought it very strange that a mystery should cloud her life that had glided along so smoothly ever since she could remember. She wondered what the secret could possibly be, and as she could conceive no answer, she quieted her emotions by the self-assertion that it was nothing for which she herself was responsible.

As to her love for the young ranger, she experienced no regrets in admitting to herself the truth of the matter—that, from the moment she looked into his eyes, she loved him. She could not help it. It came unbidden like an electric thrill. But where now was the object of her love? Would she ever see him again?

These and many other questions arose in her mind, but, being unanswerable, they filled her heart with a vague, painful longing.

The evening was finally ushered in, and with the first shades of twilight, the stirring sound of the music of violins floated out upon the balmy air. It came from the clump of trees about a hundred yards south of camp, where the platform for the *baile* had been constructed. The sound rose and fell with the variations of the tune, now high, now low, now soft, now strong—all swelling forth with a sweet, enchanting melody. It roused the spirits of the young emigrants, and the old ones, too, for that matter. Aunt Shady was taken with a sudden fit of youthful enthusiasm and began to "cut the pigeon-wing" with all the wonted spiritiveness of a maid of twenty.

The sound of fluttering feet keeping time to the music soon became mingled with the ravishing strains that floated up from the grove. It was an inviting temptation—one that youth could not resist.

Major St. Kenelm, accompanied by his sweetheart and sister, went down to the scene of festivity and amusement. Some of the men had preceded them, others came after.

Several large bonfires contributed their light to the occasion. The platform upon which the dance was held, and its surroundings, were lit up with a glare as if of the mid-day sun.

A row of seats was arranged around the edge of the platform for the dancers' accommodation, and to one of these the major connected Maggie and Octavia, and seated himself between them.

A number of couples were already on the floor, engaged in a slow waltz. The major considered fortunate, as it attracted much of the attention from them, and the maidens were saved the embarrassment of running the gantlet of fifty or more pairs of inquisitive eyes.

St. Kenelm surveyed the crowd with a critical eye. Those that took part in the

amusements of the evening were orderly-looking people, well-dressed, well-behaved and courteous—that is, in their way of viewing such things; although they were somewhat at variance with our friends' views of social manners. There were a number of bright-eyed *senoritas* there, dressed in their short frocks and slippers; and young men of different nationalities, trigged out in the gay, flashy suit of the *ranchero*, and others peculiar to the Spanish-Mexican youths of the country.

Outside, where lurked dim shadows among the trees, were congregated clumps of spectators, mostly such roughs and desperadoes as composed the crowd at the "Swill-Pail," the previous night. And several of them St. Kenelm recognized, but with their bearded faces were associated no very pleasant recollections. However, they were all quiet and orderly.

Several young men, handsomely attired, came in from adjoining towns and ranches. A few of them were strangers there, but this seemed to give the party little concern, and the youths were admitted without a word to the platform, where they at once entered into the full spirit of the occasion. And if there was any preference shown by the *senoritas* for the assembled youths, it seemed to be in favor of those who were strangers. In fact, the maidens seemed to vie with each other in making the young strangers' evening at Con-jos one of pleasure.

Our three friends studied every action and movement of the people closely. They saw that they possessed none of those rigid formalities of politeness and social etiquette to which they had been accustomed; and which, to some, makes fashionable society burdensome. All acted out their natures in a mutual sociability. Their gallantry and sentiments were the spontaneous outburst of their natures. Introductions were entirely dispensed with. If a gentleman wished a partner for the next waltz or cotillion, and he was a stranger, he had only to select his lady and make his wishes known. It seemed an incumbent duty for her to accept—at least, she always did, and all went on merrily as ever.

Our friends, by close observation, soon became posted in all the particulars pertaining to society in this far south-western land.

Both Octavia and Maggie loved to dance, but they felt it would be useless for them to attempt those strange figures and steps among those born dancers, whose women were perfection itself in the art—their movements so graceful; their rising, falling, bowing, sinking and waving of handkerchiefs so in keeping with the tune that they seemed to float upon the varying waves of the music.

The "proprietor" of the *baile* waited upon St. Kenelm and his fair companions, and invited them to take a part in the dancing. They declined on the ground of being unaccustomed to their steps and dances.

"Si, *senor*," replied the proprietor, "your American dances—your cotillions and waltzes we dance sometimes, and a set for a cotillion will soon be called especially for your pleasure."

"Thank you, sir," replied St. Kenelm, "but we only came here as spectators, and have no desire to expose our ignorance of the 'light fantastic toe.'"

"No excuses, *senor*," replied the Mexican, with a smile. "I will make an announcement for a cotillion soon, and hope you will respond."

The proprietor glided away and the dancing went on.

St. Kenelm, and the maidens at his side, continued to watch the graceful forms, whirling, circling and floating away in the giddy mazes of the waltz.

Suddenly the major felt his sister clutch his arm with a violent start, while a little cry of surprise burst from her lips.

acter of a stranger before he is permitted to take part in the dance. I dare say he will soon march up to some Mexican belle and lead her right out upon the floor without the least ceremony."

At this juncture the music ceased and the dancers sought their seats.

Then the announcement was made that a "set for a cotillion would form on the floor."

Before the words were scarcely uttered, the young stranger was seen making his way across the stage toward our three friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

As he approached, the young man put out his hand toward St. Kenelm, saying:

"Senior, I am supremely happy to see you here, and to know that you escaped unharm."

"I presume I know," replied St. Kenelm, grasping the youth's hand, "what you have reference to."

"The saloon," said the lad.

"The same," responded the major, "though I scarcely recognize the bashful boy in citizen's gray in yourself."

The youth smiled, and, turning to Octavia, lifted his hat, and said:

"Seniorita, I congratulate you on your escape from the savages the evening I met you on the road."

"Thank you, sir," Octavia replied, blushing crimson almost, "and to you, I believe, is owing the salvation of our whole train."

"It is a pleasure to know that I was near enough to be of service to the train. But, fair seniorita, you and I are Americans, and Americans dance cotillions. Would you honor me with your company, this dance?"

"With pleasure," replied Octavia, half-unconsciously, and, rising to her feet, she accepted the proffered arm of the young cavalier, and was escorted to the floor.

Major St. Kenelm did not approve of this act of his sister.

To him it seemed too familiar for such limited acquaintance. But then he saw that Octavia's girlish infatuation had led her away, and while he decided not to reproach her for this first unbecoming act, he determined it should not be repeated on that or any other occasion.

He felt in no way indignant toward the youth, for he but followed the too familiar customs of the country. Moreover, he, as well as the whole train, was under a life-long obligation to the boy who had, upon Octavia's own evidence, saved the whole train from an Indian massacre.

The music finally struck up, and Octavia and her companion were soon whirling away in the dance.

The major and his pretty sweetheart watched them with an admiring gaze through the whole dance. When the music at length ceased, the youth escorted Octavia to her former seat by her brother's side, and thanked her with the fervent gallantry of a young knight, for the honor she had conferred upon him.

Then, with a polite bow to all, he turned and moved away toward the opposite end of the platform.

He was near the middle of the floor, when a rock, hurled by an unseen hand, whizzed past his head and struck the ground several paces beyond. Another stone fell on the floor at his feet.

The youth stopped on the floor and gazed around him, with a calm, defiant look, for the authors of the cowardly act.

"That's him! that's him!" suddenly burst from the lips of one of the rowdies standing off at one side, "that's the very lark that caused the trouble of other night at the saloon."

The boy advanced to the edge of the platform, and, folding his arms upon his breast, said, in a calm, defiant tone:

"Villains, I defy you!"

For a moment a general row was threatened. The rowdies gathered in a body at one side, brandishing knives and pistols and uttering fearful execrations.

The manager of the *baile* advanced to the edge of the platform and addressed the rabble in kind words, begging them not to raise a disturbance in the presence of the females.

But he was only answered by clamorous demands for the boy, and, like wolves, gradually growing bolder, they edged and crowded toward the platform.

They held the balance of power in point of numbers, and a knowledge of this fact emboldened them.

"We want that boy," shouted one of the desperadoes; "he's the very chap that caused the death of Zeke Tarlo, Tom Eakers and Long John to other night at the 'Swill-Pail.' We don't want to raise a fuss here, but we do want that young, white-livered cuss, and, what's more, we'll have him or die."

"Gentlemen, or rather rowdies," said the youth, advancing to the edge of the platform nearest to them. "I'm afraid you'll die, for you cannot have your wish gratified. I did not enter the saloon the other night to raise a disturbance, and so I am not responsible for the death of your friends. I sincerely regret that there was any blood shed at all; though, I daresay, Conojos and the world would be better off to-day if you had all been killed. I did not come here to-night for a fight, and at any other time I am willing to meet you whenever and wherever you may appoint, and adjust this matter—this grudge you hold against me for fancied injuries."

"Hear, will ye?" roared an outlaw, "the young squirt talks as though he was a host. But, that won't work, my gay and festive young cuss. You can't intimidate us fellows that's on our muscle. You've got to walk the chalk right out of thar, or else we'll snake ye out by the heels."

By this time the confusion among the dancers amounted almost to a panic. Maggie and Octavia were trembling with terror. A commotion of fear swayed the crowd. The desperadoes advanced still closer and closer toward the brave, unflicking boy.

"See here, villains!" the youth suddenly exclaimed, in a stern, resolute tone, holding above his head, between his thumb and forefinger, a small silver whistle which all could see distinctly, "if you persist in a row here, I will make it a bloody one for you. You will not get off as you did at the saloon the other night. You have scorned my power—you have mocked my youth; but let me tell you, desperadoes, that one blast upon that whistle will bring a troop of armed men upon you. I am Red Rob, the Boy Road-Agent, and my men are within call—yea, even within sound of my voice!"

These words fell like a thunderbolt upon the ears of those who heard them. The outlaws recoiled from the presence of the youth as if from the mouth of a cannon about to be fired. The dancers became panic-stricken and fled from the platform in wild confusion.

At the end of one minute but a single person remained upon the platform or within the glare of the bonfires.

And that person was Red Rob, the Boy Road-Agent.

A smile of grim triumph lit up the face of the young outlaw; then he uttered a series of "clucking" whistles, when a riderless horse—a beautiful cream-colored or "buck-skin" mustang stud, with white mane and tail, and handsomely caparisoned, galloped from the darkness into the glare of the lights.

The youth spoke to it; it came alongside of the platform; the young outlaw mounted it and galloped away. And soon the clatter of four score of hooved feet was heard, retreating from the lower end of the grove, in the direction of the mountains.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 266.)

False Faces:

THE MAN WITHOUT A NAME.
A MYSTERY OF THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

BY GEO. L. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "A LIVING LIE," "SNARED TO DEATH," "SERIAL OLYDE," "ELMA'S CAPTIVITY," "STELLA, A STAR."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST EXPLOIT.

THE family at the Bartyne wells read the story of the escape in the newspapers. It was graphically described by a reporter, and the "Mysterious Female" entered largely into the account.

They were all surprised at it, and Raymond Bartyne was not only surprised but vexed. "I'll never check a good impulse again!" he cried.

"What good impulse have you checked, Raymond?" inquired his father.

"When we captured Edgar Skelmersdale I was sorely tempted to put a bullet through him. I'm sorry I did not do so now."

"Such thoughts are sinful!" said Almira, reprovingly.

"P'raps they are," responded Ossian; "but they are nat'ral for all that. When I was a boy I never saw a pesky snake that I didn't want to put my heel onto his head and smash him. And if ever there was a pesky snake this Edgar Skelmersdale is one."

"I think I should shoot him if I had a good chance!" cried Kate.

"He certainly is a very bad man!" said Etta.

Almira found herself in a decided minority. The feeling against the villain who had wrought so much woe to them was very bitter in the Bartyne family; and Kate Vehslage shared in it, for she considered herself one of the family, as Raymond's attentions to her evidently "meant something."

As she phrased it—and her heart beat delightedly over the definition that she found for that "something."

"I shall start right away for New York," Raymond continued.

This announcement surprised them.

"Why?" was demanded.

"I intend to place Edgar Skelmersdale again in captivity," he answered. "I shall never feel contented until I have done so. I might as well earn that thousand dollars as any other man."

"Let him go," rejoined Genni Bartyne. "Justice is sure at last to overtake him. He will not trouble us again, I think."

Raymond shook his head doubtfully.

"I'm not so sure of that," he replied. "His fortunes are now at a desperate strait, or he and his confederates would not have made that bold and unsuccessful attempt upon the National bank at Wilmington. There is no telling what they may do next."

"I do not think they will dare to venture here," returned his father. "There are fifty workmen within call of us."

"It would be pretty risky business if they did come here," said Ossian. "The men here read the papers, and they know how near Miry came to getting killed, and if they were to find any of the scamps prowling round here they'd make it pretty lively for them. I guess there wouldn't be any need of a judge and jury after they got through with them."

"You are right, Ossian," rejoined Raymond; "the villains will hardly dare to venture here. I think they have returned to their old haunts in New York, and I want to have a hand in their recapture."

Raymond was not to be dissuaded from his purpose, and that afternoon he took his departure for New York.

Kate worked a good deal over his going, though he left a parting kiss upon her lips; but the remembrance of that was only an aggravation.

"Oh! if he should be killed!" she told herself, debating. "Officers do get killed sometimes. Oh! wouldn't it be dreadful to be made a widow before we're married?"

Etta endeavored to console Kate, but she had got the idea that something was going to happen Raymond, and she could not be persuaded out of it. Like a great many people in this world, she borrowed misery to torment herself, and she did so successfully.

A week passed away, and they did not receive any tidings from Raymond.

"No news is good news," said Genni Bartyne, borrowing the proverb from the French. They were now in the month of January.

There had been several snow-storms until quite a quantity of snow had accumulated, and the weather had been severely cold; but now came a sudden change—the thaw which always comes in January.

It brought warm, sunny days, when the air was genial and balmy with the breath of spring. Little rivulets trickled from every hillside and went dancing in the sunbeams to add their water to the swollen and turbid creek.

The roads were miry, and traveling became irksome. The nights were dark and misty.

One of these nights, when the family were all assembled in the common sitting-room, before a fire of bituminous coal, which burned brightly in the grate, engaged in various occupations, a band of masked men burst suddenly in upon them.

Kate, sitting by the table, was the first to perceive them, and she slipped from her chair, and crawled quickly under the table. In the confusion that followed, this movement upon her part was not detected by the intruders; for on their first entrance Etta had screamed, Almira had uttered an exclamation of surprise, and Genni Bartyne and Ossian Plummer had started to their feet.

A desperate struggle ensued, but there were nine masked men, and the result could not be doubtful.

Bartyne and Plummer were overpowered, gagged, and bound, and each placed in a chair. Almira and Etta were served in the same manner.

When this was accomplished, the leader of the masked men removed his mask, disclosing the features of Edgar Skelmersdale.

He confronted Genni Bartyne with malignant triumph.

"Again I have you in my power!" he cried; "and this time you shall not escape me. Listen to the terms I propose: Here is the deed of sale which was offered to you before. Produce it, Nightshade."

The little lawyer stepped nimbly forward, with the document in his hand, but he did not unmask his face.

"Sign it, or both you and your daughters shall die!" continued Edgar Skelmersdale. "Nod your head affirmatively, and your bonds shall be removed."

But Genni Bartyne did not nod his head affirmatively; he only stared at the robber with a fixed look of firm determination.

"You are obstinate! Then we will kill you all and rifle the house!" cried Skelmersdale, fiercely.

Genni Bartyne smiled defiantly. He knew that he could not expect any mercy on any terms, that the villains had come there to rob and murder.

"Henchmen, Aconite, Cresote, Arsenic, advance!" continued Edgar.

Four of the masks approached the chairs of the captives, each selecting a particular one in the order in which they were called.

"Prepare!"

Four bowie knives were unsheathed, and flashed before the captives' eyes.

Kate, peeping from under the table, saw that the way was clear to the open door; she crawled out and darted for it.

Her sudden appearance startled Edgar, and checked his murderous purpose for the time.

"Ha! pursue her!" he cried.

"Leave her to me!" answered the voice of Dora Boyd, coming from what appeared to be a man's figure, with a black mask over his face.

Kate flew into the entry, but she did not run out at the front door, as Dora had expected, but darted swiftly up the stairs leading to the story above.

Dora hesitated for a moment, bewildered by this movement, and then followed her, with a gleaming knife in her hand.

No mercy now for Kate if she was overtaken; the fierce quadron would stab her to the heart remorselessly.

But Kate had her wits about her. She knew that Genni Bartyne's revolver was lying in the little box beneath the looking-glass upon the bureau, and that it was loaded and capped, for she had looked at it curiously that very day when she had tidied up his room and built a fire in the grate.

That fire was still burning, its flickering flame, from the oily, soft coal, showing through the open door.

She also knew that from the windows of this room she could summon the workmen of the wells to their assistance.

Her first thought was to secure the revolver, and stand in the doorway confronting her pursuer. She was not ignorant of the use of the pistol. Raymond Bartyne had instructed her, and allowed her to shoot at birds with his revolver as they strolled together on the banks of the creek.

The knowledge thus acquired served her well now.

As Dora gained the landing Kate fired at her point-blank; Dora uttered a piercing cry, fell backward, and plunged headlong down the stairs.

Then Kate rushed to one of the windows, threw it up, thrust out her head, and shouted at the top of her lungs:

"Murder, help! Murder, help, help!"

Then she hastened back to the landing to dispute the ascent of any others of the band.

The sound of the pistol, Dora's fall, and the shrill, warning cry of Kate, caused the robbers to flock tumultuously into the hall.

Edgar Skelmersdale raised the form of Dora in his arms.

"Dread!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "Oh, vengeance! Kill her! Kill them all!"

He drew his revolver and sprang up the stairs, but Kate, shrouded in the gloom above reached over the baluster and fired at him, but the bullet intended for him went through Cebra Selkreg's right arm, as he was following Skelmersdale, pistol in hand, and the sudden pain caused him to press the trigger of his pistol, and it was discharged, with deadly effect, in Skelmersdale's back; he had fired once at Kate, and was about to fire again, when the pang of this wound wheeled him around, and his revolver sent its deadly messenger among his own men.

A yell of agony followed it, and the masked man called Aconite fell dead, and at the same moment Edgar Skelmersdale dropped a corpse beside the faithful Dora.

Kate kept up a fusillade upon the throng at the foot of the stairs until she had emptied every chamber of the revolver.

The False Faces, however, did not wait to receive the last shot. Cebra Selkreg gave the word to retreat and they fled through the front door just in time to avoid the workmen, who, alarmed by Kate's cries, were hurrying to the spot.

The little lawyer was nearly distracted as he hurried through the gloom with his companions. His wound pained him keenly, and the death of Edgar Skelmersdale unnerved him.

He was obliged to lean on the doctor's arm as they hurried down the muddy road, fearful of pursuit.

"O-h! of all the awkward jobs!" he groaned. "And all that girl's doing! How did she get under the table? Did nobody see her?"

"Of course not; or she would have been bound like the rest," answered the doctor.

"Oh, blast her! And to think that I shot Skelmersdale, and all through her! There never was any mischief done in this world that a woman didn't have a hand in it. O-h! I shall bleed to death! Can't we stop long enough to bind up my wound?"

"Not yet! If we are caught we shall swing for it. The workmen of the wells will lynch us sure."

"Oh! what a mess this is. Edgar would come here though I urged him not to. O-h! I must stop—I can't go any further! Edgar's done for, and I'm nearly finished—and Dora's killed. Oh! doctor, I'm going. Oh! have I got to die here like a dog in the mud?"

Doctor Watervliet feared that the lawyer would bleed to death unless the flow of blood was stopped.

"Go on, disperse, and save yourselves," he said to the men. "Get back to New York, the best way you can. I'll remain with Nightshade."

The men sped swiftly away in the gloom.

"Oh, go it! each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost!" snarled Selkreg, wrathfully, as he saw them depart so quickly without extending one word of consolation to him in his plight.

"Stick to me, doctor," he added, pleadingly.

"I will. Let us turn into the wood here, and then I will bind up your wound. I think the bullet must have cut an artery, or it would not bleed so freely."

"Oh! I'm cut out for a coffin, I think. This is the end of the False Faces!"

"It looks like it!"

The doctor led Selkreg into the wood, and placed him at the foot of a tree. He had a pocket-case of instruments and a dark lantern with him, which he invariably carried upon all expeditions.

He took out the lantern and lit it, and then he opened his case.

"Let's see the wound," he said. "Ah, yes; an artery severed, as I thought."

"How the blood spurts!" stammered Selkreg, who was very pale.

"Yes; that's the action of the heart. It's just like a force-pump, sending blood through the veins. Beautiful, isn't it?"

"Oh, beautiful be— You doctors haven't any more feeling than a rhinoceros! Is it fat?"

"Am I going to d-i-e?"

Selkreg's teeth chattered together as he put this question.

"I guess not," answered the doctor. "I'll knot the ends of the artery, and you'll do; but it will give you a severe twinge."

"Go it! anything's better than dying. Ough! Augh! Is it done?"

"Yes, you'll do now," answered the doctor, bandaging the wound. "You appear to be very much afraid of death."

"No, not afraid; only I dislike to go in a hurry to any place where I'm not acquainted."

Now that he felt himself out of danger Selkreg's spirits began to revive.

"Do you feel well enough to go on?" inquired the doctor.

"I must feel well enough," answered Selkreg, as he struggled up to his feet; "for if we do not get away from this neighborhood before morning we shall be captured sure."

"Come on then."

They proceeded on their way.

Leaving them, let us return to the house which they quitted with so much precipitation.

Kate maintained her post at the head of the stairs, for she could not believe that she had put the robbers to flight by her unaided efforts, until she heard the voices of the workmen as they entered the house.

Recognizing them as familiar, she descended, and gazed curiously upon the three bodies lying in the hall.

"Oh! did I kill them all?" she exclaimed, amazedly.

"It would seem so, Kate," said Genni Bartyne, who, having been unbound, now appeared in the door of the sitting-room. "Come here!"

Kate followed him into the room, where the men were freeing the others from their disagreeable bonds.

"My men," continued Genni Bartyne, "here is the brave girl who saved us all!"

The workmen gave Kate quite a cheer.

"Yes, and she's killed three of 'em," cried one of the workmen. "She's a stunner!"

"Three! And he—" Bartyne paused and looked at Kate inquiringly.

"I don't know," she answered. "I couldn't look at them. I may have been very brave then, but I'm all of a tremble now."

Kate dropped the pistol, and sunk into a chair. Etta came to her, put her arms around her neck and kissed her tenderly.

"You are just as brave as you can be," she said. "Raymond will be very proud of you for this."

"Will he?" rejoined Kate, delightedly.

Bartyne stepped into the hall and saw the upturned face of Edgar Skelmersdale, pale and rigid.

"At last!" he said. "Beneath this very roof he struck the murderous blow that robbed me of my heart's treasure, and blighted all my life—and here he has met his doom. This is Heaven's own retribution!"

Raymond Bartyne heard of this last exploit of the False Faces in Meadville, having traced them so far, but never supposing that they meditated a blow against his father. He thought their design was to rob a bank in one of the small cities of the oil region.

By his exertions every surviving member of the band was captured; and they were consigned to a stronger prison than the one from which they had escaped to work out their sentences.

Having accomplished this Raymond returned to the Bartyne wells, and there he received a full account of Kate's share in the events of that night of peril.

"We owe a great deal to that girl," said Genni Bartyne.

"I think I can contrive to pay her," answered Raymond.

Father and son looked at each other and smiled.

"I have no objection," remarked Bartyne.

"I thought you wouldn't have."

Shortly after this Raymond found Kate alone.

"You are just the kind of young woman that I have been looking for," he cried.

Kate's heart began to beat violently. She knew what was coming but pretended not to; yet her answer was a very encouraging one.

"Well, I've been willing to be found," she said.

"Father says you ought to be paid for what you've done."

"Your father is just the best man that ever lived!"

"And how's his son?"

"Oh! you'll do!"

"Do for you?"

"Yes," answered Kate, blushing.

"You are too smart a female to be allowed to go out of this family, and so I have concluded that the best way—to keep you in it—would be for me—to—"

Raymond had spoken this very slowly, and he now made a tantalizing pause.

"Well?" gasped Kate.

"To—to marry you!"

"And will you?"

"If you will have me?"

"Oh! won't I?"

Kate's face was radiant now.

"And will you love me?" continued Raymond, roughly.

"Love you?"

"Just a little?"

"Oh! ever so much!"

"Then you do love me a little already?"

"You know I do! My heart is brimful of love for you, and if I had sixteen hearts they'd all run over with it!"

"Then we'll consider it settled; and when Chester and Etta are married we will undergo the same ceremony."

"That will be delightful!"

"Then we'll seal the bond."

And the seal was lip to lip, and firmly stamped.

"You could not have given me a better sister!" cried Etta; and she embraced Kate affectionately.

Genni Bartyne found an opportunity for a little private conversation with Almira Plummer.

"Almira, our young people are going to mate," he said. "There's Etta and Chester, and Kate and Raymond. When they are married they will reside in New York, coming down here occasionally to visit us. You and I, and Ossian, will live here; but I have been thinking that you and I, Almira, may as well get married first, just to set the young people a good example."

"Peter!" she murmured, and turned very pale.

"Genni," he corrected her. "Genni Bartyne. I have come back to my true name forever more."

"You will always be Peter to me."

"Because under that name you learned to love me?"

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
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We give our readers a genuine surprise in

TIGER DICK; OR, The Cashier's Crime, BY PHILIP S. WARNE,

the opening chapters of which grace this number. As a gallery of portraits of character which only American "civilization" could produce the work will challenge attention. Bret Harte never presented from his peculiar experience a photograph-to-the-life of a Sport and Daring Villain that will compare with the keenest portraiture of Tiger Dick; and in his associates and confederates we meet with the same hand and art in their unfolding, while in the story proper, in which they are involved, we have something quite out of the line of the usual matter-of-course mystery, or of the absurdly impossible in fact. It is such a train of acts and incidents as seem real enough to be an actual transcript from the history of a Mississippi River City, and yet so remarkable are its elements of interest that no reader can fail to follow the "unraveling of the tangled skein" with that eager expectancy, surprise and delight which only a truly powerful narrative can command. The romance, of course, will be the great "hit" of the season.

The Arm-Chair.

The demand for Mrs. Fleming's "Dark Secret" has been so great that it long since ran out of print. To meet the continued calls for it we have published it in a beautiful twenty-five cent volume, which all dealers will now supply. This announcement will be received with pleasure, we know, by a large class of readers. The story is one of the very best ever written by its noted author, and in its new shape will be so cheap as to be within the reach of all.

We have from a correspondent out in Illinois a long communication aimed at the large class composed chiefly of young men, who swarm over the country as "agents" and "commercial-travelers." These he characterizes as idlers and nuisances, who only add very largely to the cost of everything they sell to cover their commissions, or salaries and expenses, and, what is still worse, abandon farms, shops and trades where they are producers and useful citizens to become mere speculators and adventurers.

While there is, in this case, something to be said for the defendant, we are quite willing to admit the force of the logic that every middleman only adds to the cost of the article he handles; and we are forced, too, to accept the conclusion of such logic that true economy demands the abolition of unnecessary processes and burdens.

The fact that our young men, in yearly increasing numbers, leave their fathers' callings, to enter upon those which seem to promise greater rewards, in lesser time, with slighter expenditure of manual labor is one of those unpleasant evidences of misapplied resources which every true economist must deplore. Everywhere the cry is the same: give me something "genteel" to do, and everywhere the unwillingness to work the farm, to run the shop, to learn the trade is so much an accepted condition that fathers no longer offer any but a negative opposition to the "ambition" of their boys.

And the result is: all the avenues of commercial pursuits and all the professions are literally choked with workers, applicants and expectants. The swarm that our Illinois friend objects to are chiefs of those who, crowded out in the cities, make a "business" for themselves, by going direct to the consumer to obtain his trade and supply his wants. They have, of course, not added a dollar's worth of trade to the great aggregate of business; they have only changed the mode of supply, and, in changing, have simply added their own expenses, salaries and commissions to the general cost of the article consumed. Agreeable as they usually are, as men, and deserving as they generally are of encouragement for their industry and enterprise, the fact still remains that they only add to the array of non-producers, and render a perfectly unnecessary service to business and society.

And this fact, to our apprehension, is one of the leading causes of depression which is now so general in this country; we have too many "genteel" workmen and too few of those who honor labor in the productive world.

Messrs. Beadle and Adams are now supplying to dealers in their popular Dime Publications a very beautiful poster, printed in numerous colors. This has elicited from the trade many expressions of satisfaction, from one of which, from a well-known dealer in Baltimore, we quote:

"I would sooner sell your publications than those of any other house. I receive a batch of showbills almost every week of them—and I do not put them up for very little use to me because not being able to recommend their books or papers; I do not put their showbills to imply that I do endorse their publications."

This expresses a feeling largely prevalent in the news-trade. Of course, some dealers do not care what they sell, only so that it pays a fair profit, but there are many persons, like the writer of the above, who will not deal in what they know to be trash or demoralizing literature. Such tradesmen almost always prosper, for they win the public confidence and respect; deserving encouragement, they obtain it. It is a great thing to say, but it is nevertheless true, that of the multitude of books bearing the imprint of Beadle and Adams, there is not one which will not bear the closest scrutiny into its text. Few large publishing-houses can say as much of their list.

Sunshine Papers.

E. A. S.'s Deposition.

I HAVE grown up a plain woman. Probably my infancy was the foreshadowing of this event, and it was my parents' sense of the eternal fitness of things that led them to bestow upon me a plain name. They called me Eliza Ann. The family cognomen being the distinctive one of Smith, and I never having thought best to change it, I am Eliza Ann Smith, so baptized fifty years ago; a name not calculated to impress people's minds very vividly, which may have had something to do with the fact that I have never been popular. Better reasons may be given, however. Male bipeds like good looks and fancy fixings, until they are married and find how much such things cost, and I have always found a plain, substantial dress quite suited to the purpose for which I believe Mother Eve had gowns invented. My father, never having been president of a railroad, a Congressman, or a street-cleaning commissioner, had not much wealth to leave me. I grow old faster than most people—I stick to the dates in the family Bible. I have never preached, lectured, run a heathen sewing society, performed in a lager-beer saloon, had more than two bonnets a year, or had a silk gown oftener than once in four years, so it is not astonishing that I have received the cold shoulder from the women-folks.

Well, what I have lacked in social ways, I try to gain by living a consistent life and shirking no duties the Smith common-sense tells me I ought to perform. I attend weekly prayer-meeting regularly. I have owned a pew in church these twenty-five years, and sat in it twice every Sunday. I believe in Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Bible and our minister. He has been with us eight years come June, and many an excellent sermon has he delivered. One troubles me a little; it was upon amusements. After telling his hearers where they might and where they might not go, what they could and what they could not read, what they should and what they should not do, he ended with asserting that no one need complain of want of amusement and exercise when there was the never-failing amusement of walking; an exercise far more healthy and delightful than any of the evil ones practiced at dancing academies and gymnasia. Let the housewife find her exercise in her daily avocations, the mechanic in his work, the rest of mankind in walking.

I pondered that sermon long, for my habits were sedentary, and it had been suggested that I needed more exercise, and determined in future to frown upon horse-cars, and in performing errands about town to follow our minister's orders. That was summer. The next day I decided upon a stroll to the park. All along the street the girls were down upon the walks playing jackstones. I experienced considerable difficulty in steering my way among them; but nothing to my trials on the avenues, where the boys were engaged at marbles, and swept my dress rudely aside when it came near them, and used shocking language when my peregrinations interrupted the harmonious roll of an alley. I consoled myself with thoughts of the beauties in store for me, and only got impatient when detained half an hour or so at a dangerous crossing to be M. P.'d over, and saw a dozen girls escorted to the other side while I waited. But I knew I must get accustomed to that, so I maintained my serenity when pretty nursemaids were piloted across the thronged drives at the park entrance while I, a timorous woman afraid of horses, was forced to seek my own chances. It did seem rather like adding insult to injury to have those same nursemaids roll their baby-carriages against one's heels, or over one's toes, whatever walk I sought.

Children will be headless, so I smiled when the little girls wheeled their push-carriages in to my shins, and trundled their hoops, all dusty, against my black alpaca dress; to be sure the magic balls, and bean-bags, and hoops, that were flying about and gave one a sharp hit occasionally, were not very pleasant; nor was it bewitching to have little boys playing tag run plump into you and tumble over with a vicious grip upon your gown or shawl as they approached "mother earth." Seeing people upon the grass, I escaped thither to find myself compelled to dodge vigorously-propelled croquet-balls; and finally I turned homeward, ruminating upon the amount of scientific skill needed to walk unharmed in summer-time.

With autumn I was sure of relief, but was forced to adjourn my walk to winter, for with the days of fall I never walked out without some young imp, playing "hop-scotch," hopped directly upon some cherished part of my pedal extremities, or the gay and festive players of "shimmy" sent a stick flying into my face; balls, too, were everywhere whizzing from the resonant touch of a bat; and, between the youngsters and their base amusement, safety was so far from me that no life insurance company would have given me a ten-dollar policy upon my life if they knew that I attempted to walk abroad.

Winter and snow enticed me out with dreams of deserted walks. I had proceeded nearly a block, among a crowd of boys and girls, when a snow-ball struck my shoulder. Turning to single out the offender, a novice on skates ran against me and became frightfully entangled in the folds of my gown, and eventually sent me home to repair damages. At another venture, chopped ice disfigured my face and a sled knocked me down, and I remained domiciled until spring.

I fancied the spring would be elysium. I have found it purgatory. Mud splattered by romping young feet spoiled my clothes; kite-strings sailed off with the feather in my hat; whip-tops spun under my feet while their owners flourished the lashes about my eyes; jumping-ropes whisked my skirts around alarmingly; velocipedes drove me to my wits' ends. I have remained in the house ten days now; and I am expecting our minister will call to have my absence from church explained. I hope he will come to-day, for I am aching all over to ask him in what season of the year a lone woman may consider herself safe outside of her own doorsteps.

E. A. S.

N. B. Sometimes clergymen forget to properly assert their old sermons. It is possible that "our minister" caused E. A. S.'s miseries by preaching a sermon designed entirely for a country audience. If not, like her, we ask him to implore the next almanac-makers to mark distinctly any red-letter days upon which we may walk city streets with untroubled souls.

A PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

THE NEW DICTIONARY.

SOME TIME ago I had the pleasure of giving you a few definitions from a new dictionary I proposed issuing. The dictionary was merely in my imagination then, and it remains there still, and as I do not see much prospect of any publisher being rash enough to undertake its

issue I have decided to inflict a few more of the new version interpretations upon you.

CONTENTMENT. An article not much met with in these degenerate times. It is something too "old foggy" to suit the modern generation. Home delights are not considered of any consequence, for the main reason that the owners of the homes do not place any delights in them; a home being, to them, merely a place to eat and sleep in, and in which they take about as much comfort as they would at a third-class boarding-house. True contentment consists in being satisfied with everything and everybody, to take the world as it comes, the sunshine and the shower, the night and the day, the dark and the light. It does not consist in eternally grumbling and finding fault and making every one around you miserable. That's not contentment. Not one bit of it. If it is, then my dictionary tells a story.

LOVE. Of course there is such a thing, because we hear so much about it; but, somehow, it seems to me there's a great deal of trouble and worry mixed up with it, else folks wouldn't pester editors so much with their notes concerning blighted affections and the cruel manner in which Hepsy Jane treats Peter John, or the heartrending conduct of Algernon George toward the disconsolate Helena Lucretia.

I have heard of a man who invariably asks his applicants for situations if they are in love. If the reply is in the affirmative the applicant is not engaged. The reason of this being that lovers lay awake so much of the night thinking of their sweethearts as to cause them to be sleepy and unfit them for doing anything the next day. Some poet has written, "Love is enough." Why didn't he complete the sentence and make it read, "Love is enough to drive one crazy?" Some lovers do act as though they took leave of their senses when they commence to experience that very annoying passion, love. Ah, well, we mustn't complain too much, for this world would be like an arid desert were it not for love.

CURIOSITY. It is peeping through keyholes, prying into another's secrets, poking one's nose where it has no business to be; it is lifting up pie-crusts to see how much sugar you put in your pies, and what price you paid for it; it is opening bureau-drawers and hunting for and reading letters which were not intended for your eyes to look upon; it is following persons to see where they pass their evenings; it is asking at the apothecary's if Miss Mayden ever purchased paint, as you want to discover whether her color is her own or not; it is asking if John Henry pays his board regularly, and, if not, what does he do with his money? It is popping in on one suddenly to see if folks are speaking any ill of you; it is happening in at meal-times to find out how a person lives when there is no company; it is making a contemptible, disagreeable and outrageous nuisance of one's self.

FASHION. An incomprehensibility that seems almost unfathomable. One may be in debt, may plot treason or break the entire Ten Commandments, and yet have hopes of forgiveness, but, to be "out of the fashion" is a sin and a crime almost unpardonable. You may look like a monkey, walk like a camel, wear as much hair on your head as a bison does on its whole body and have the manners of a Hottentot, but, if it's "the fashion," it is perfectly right; and he who says one word against it deserves to be shot or sent to the Gaboon country where fashions are so primitive that India gazelles and old laces are never asked for; and I sometimes think that, were some recognized leader of the ton to adopt the costume of the Gaboons the fashion would be accepted unhesitatingly. Better that than that other extreme where money and time and even life itself are sacrificed to the behests of fashion.

But, who pauses to think of sacrifices? Nobody! We must be willing to see people dying of starvation all around us and not think it hard that fashion decrees us to drag fifteen to twenty dollars' worth of material over the dirty, dusty sidewalk. Oh, no. Far better to follow the fashion than to relieve the suffering. Let the suffering suffer, and wise heads shake, and Eve Lawless grumble. Is it their business what it costs a nation to be fashionable? None, to be sure. They are humbugs.

Are they? Look out for the fool-killer, oh, ye sycophants, time-servers and slaves of a degrading master!

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolscap Papers.

Spelling-Bee.

SPELLING-BEES have been buzzing very thickly through the West of late and have at length struck New York.

Last night the Spelling-Bee under my auspices at the Steinway Hall was a magnificent affair.

The hall was so crowded that there was hardly standing room—which was the main reason so many of the spellers had to take their seats.

Everybody knows what a great speller I am. I once wrote a spelling-book which knocked Webster all hollow, although I intended no disrespect to that immortal speller. If I ever do make a mistake in writing it is not intended, but done just for fun.

I have such a command of the letters of the English alphabet that it is said I can throw them together in the most reckless and off-hand manner and make them word out of them right or perhaps not the word I intended, but at least some word, anyhow.

Therefore I was deputized to get up this great Spelling-Match, and it was a success. The man who stood up the longest was to receive a magnificent prize of a pretzel, suitably engraved; not silver-mounted.

Local celebrities and men of the time predominated in the class, which I ranged against the wall, with instructions to hold their heads up and prop their ears open.

Jerry Black, the classical peanut-vender, said he had left his spelling-book at home, but had an idea that carpet was spelled with a k, and therefore went down on the carpet.

Bob Smith, the philosophical boot-black, in an emotional suit of old rags, hunched his neighbor for a little hint and spelled gimlet wrong and sat down, badly bored.

Jack O'Brien stretched his head where the word he happened to be, and spelled permit with two t's, and got a permit to sit down and look on.

Rooky Buggles, the eminent sawyer of short stove-wood, took two bites of tobacco and spelled anaconda in such a roundabout manner that it got him down, and he remarked he knew Ana but wasn't acquainted with conda.

Nobby Jones, the intelligent butcher-boy, rolled his eyes around in the atmosphere after the word pension, spelled it with a u, and was put on the retired list without any pension at all.

Jake Weller, the distinguished oyster-peddler, spit on his hands and spelled galaxy crossways, and joined the galaxy of the defeated.

Dummy Davids wiped his mouth with the inside lining of his coat-tail, and spelled conquer with a k, and sat down conquered, to rest himself.

Jim Billings, the learned coal-heaver, spelled surrender in seventeen inconceivable ways, and finally surrendered, remarking that a word that admits of so many variations shouldn't be admitted in any well-regulated spelling-book.

Tim Podgers rolled up his sleeves, and spelled off in a cross-eyed manner, and took his seat awful quick, saving he was well acquainted with all the letters in the word but the placing of them rightly was what bothered him—nothing else as sure as he lived.

Patty Brown, the talented and studious vender of shrimps, looked intently at his toe that was crawling out of his boot, and spelled certain in a very uncertain manner and sat down to eat his apple, amid great applause.

Joe Bosses, the tenderly reared distributor of morning newspapers, went up on ladder, and immediately went down.

The celebrated saven, Dick Milligan, who drives an elegant two-in-hand dray when he appears on our streets, spelled vacuum with the right letters out, and left a vacuum in the ranks, and sat down on the soft point of a pin, which some benevolent individual had fixed on his chair, and confusion rose for a spell.

When Ben Bilger, the ex-peanut man, threw his whole heart and soul and too many t's in color, he lost his color, and it took two policemen to put him down. He swore they were the only men in the house who could put him down.

Muggy Jim took his hand out of his neighbor's pocket, and spoiled pudding by leaving out a d, one of the principal ingredients, and walked orthographically to his seat, fanning himself with what was left of his straw hat.

The celebrated scholar, Joe Gruden, whose position on a warm stove box on a corner is always prominent, hitched up his trousers and spelled right altogether wrong, and said he didn't care a darn, he could put a learned head on any muggins who laughed at him. He was politely requested to take a chair.

Omnibus Sammy spelled deviate with great deviation from the regular rule, and he sat down on a chair which a fellow had just removed from under him, and in a minute the fellow was sent down-stairs to be mended.

Tricky Bob spelled memory in a way that showed it had slipped his memory, and went down, saying he wouldn't help them spell any more.

Base-ball Johnny winked at a girl in the audience, and spelled fair with a y; he was pronounced foul and out by the umpire.

Hunkie Bill, who is a gentleman of elegant leisure, and conducts the other side of a good many prize-fights, spelled razor with an e, which was a close shave, but he was allowed to sit down for a spell.

It was obvious that Nasty Mike's way of spelling obvious wasn't worth a cent a bushel.

John Dobies orthographed the word succor with one c, and was therefore a gone sucker.

Slim William said he usually wrote conducted for conduct, the worst conduct imaginable. He was conducted to his seat.

When Sleepy Henry, with holes in his elbows, spelled resine he was ordered to resign his place.

The last man, Oily John, the accomplished organ-grinder, couldn't be got down, so I had to hire a fellow to go up and knock him down, and it was found that he had eaten nothing but spelling-books on toast for six weeks, slept on three dictionaries, used newspapers for sheets, and had knocked the entire intelligence out of three city editors.

The Spelling-Match was a great success, as I said before.

Yours for a spell,
WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

Woman's World.

AN ANSWER.

A LADY friend writing from Detroit, Mich., says:

"I have looked in vain through all the so-called 'Fashion Papers' for what I want—a plain yet stylish dress. Is there no such thing in existence, or are the fashion purveyors bound to drive us all into flipper and extravagance, whether we will or no?"

Many others beside our correspondent have asked and are yet to ask the same question. The "dress of the period" is so much a work of art and design that the material from which it is made is almost lost in the overlays and trimmings. Besides being very expensive in first cost, the mere adjustment of these trimmings and accompaniments is a matter of much money. A dress "with all the modern attachments" cannot now be made, for its mere cost of construction, for less than from twelve to thirty dollars—over one-half of which sum is for the adjuncts, while the expense of the trimmings is, in many cases, equal to the whole outlay for the making. An afternoon dress that costs less than thirty dollars is quite a marvel among women who "pretend to dress" in style; and, so far has this extravagance proceeded, that the woman who cannot don a dress that is able to pass the ordeal of another's scrutiny will refuse to "go out," and will actually stay away, even from church, because of her inability to adopt what is most "stylish" and new.

For this state of things our fashion reporters are somewhat to blame, for they have it in their power to give plainness and elegance without tawdriness, a popular currency. It is useless to say that they are mere reporters of what they see, for any one knows that knows anything of the power of these fashion journals, that they can popularize almost any sensible style which they see proper to advocate; and that they so persistently run to elaborate toilets—to intricacy of designs and extremes of cost in their styles, patterns and suggestions, shows them to be the not-unwilling missionaries of those who live by the extravagance of the people. This is about the long and short of it.

The woman of fashion of course will not heed strictures on the fashion, nor listen to pleas for plainer attire. She would be nothing if not fashionable. Her dress is almost the only superiority she can boast; take it from her—compel her to moderation in expense and to abjure the "stunning" in style, and she would at once subside into a nobody. This she realizes with a keen apprehension, and to that sense of its importance to her is due much of what is now so general—the dreadful devotion to dress.

As we wrote a few weeks ago—it is for our women of sense and assured social position to say how much further this worship and sacrifice at the altar of style shall go. To go further is sure destruction. The time for refusal to accept what the fashion journals prescribe is here, and we hope our correspondent will set the good example of utterly refusing to trail an elegant robe in the dirt or to so overload herself with the incidentals to dress as to seem but a walking fancy store. GRACE LISTON.

Readers and Contributors.

TO CORRESPONDENTS AND AUTHORS.—No MSS. received that are not fully prepaid in postage.—No MSS. preserved for future orders.—Unavailable MSS. promptly returned—only when stamps accompany the inclosure, for such return.—No correspondence of any nature is permissible in a package marked as "Book MSS."—MSS. which are imperfect are not used or wanted. In all cases our choice rests first upon merit or value, second upon brevity, and third, length. Of two MSS. of equal merit we always prefer the shorter.—Never write on both sides of a sheet. Use Commercial Note size paper as most convenient to editor and compositor, tearing off each page as it is written, and carefully giving it its full or page number.—A rejection by no means implies a want of merit. Many MSS. unsuitable to us are well worthy of use.—All experienced and popular writers will find an ever ready to give their offerings early attention.—Contributors must look to this column for all information in regard to contributions. We can not write letters except in special cases.

We must decline "Alice Wondover's Lover," "The First Patient," "Mexican's Revenge," "Jim Smith's Will," "The Canyon Robber's Revenge," "A Stroke of Luck," "Going Through the Green," "O'Blarney's Ghost," "A Specimen Stone," "Morn and Night," "The Faithless Fair," "A Sermone," "The Glow Hand."

We accept "May," "Deceit and Deceit," "Love's First Kiss," "A Trade of Ranches," "The Old Mustang's Secret," "Arkansas Bees," "The Young Widow's Legacy," "The Serpent in the Myrtle Bed."

Again we say to authors and correspondents—use black ink. Fancy inks fade quickly and are hard to read in any but the strongest light. Hence compositors abhor the blue, brown, green and violet "fluids" which some people "affect."

H. L. T. Only act openly in the matter. Avoid subterfuge. Candor is your strength.

ORDWAY, JR. The wages of an ordinary clerk in New York, averages about \$600 per year.

Mrs. N. D. E. See advertisement regarding Mrs. May Agnes Fleming's "Dark Secret" in Arm-Chair.

A Victim. Carbolic acid with glycerine is excellent for chilblains. Relieve the spot from any pressure.

AMERICUS. Jurymen when summoned and accepted must serve. They are paid per diem for their time.

STAR READER. We have a very fine Revolutionary romance by the author of "Snow-Hunters"—it has been given in due season.

E. H. G. Cannot use MS. It is crude. Your chronology is more ornate than is requisite for elegance or for commercial purposes.

STEREOSCOPE. Write to Anthony & Co., New York, for list. They are the most extensive dealers in the country, we believe, in views and material.

WM. E. B. Your subscription expired with No. 249. We shall not reprint the Wolf Demon. It may be given in cheap book form to answer the continued call for its republication.

OLD SUBSCRIBER. Porter's Spirit of the Times is now George Wilkes' Spirit of the Times. Porter died many years ago according to the almanac.

G. P. K. Write to Max Jacoby & Co., corner John and William streets, N. Y., for their terms. A very good chromo can be had at the rate of \$1 per dozen pictures.

JANED. Historic sketches, as such, are not popular, even when prepared by well-known writers. The reason why the public must answer. It certainly is not policy for us to give what is not called for.

MISS BARBARA. Whittier never was married. He is now nearly 70 years of age and leads a very quiet—almost lonely life. An old maiden sister is his housekeeper. They are both good Quakers.

Mrs. HENSON. No prize. Nuttall & Co. will get you up a pattern, if you will produce a biography or history on short notice. He wrote many "Lives" and "Histories." His books have no special literary value, but are useful in the court and Reign of Catherine II. of Russia is in print.

KASSON. A good knowledge of German, French or Spanish can never be obtained from books alone. A good teacher is very essential, especially if you desire a speaking fluency. As to Latin, it is the basis of all the modern languages of Southern Europe as well as of the English. A knowledge of it, therefore, is a great aid in acquiring any of the languages named. We advise you by all means to study it. Even if you do not get beyond Caesar and Virgil it will pay. This is our advice.

CASPER HAUSEN. Under the new German Marriage Act a priest or a nun may legally marry, and the law decrees that "all prescriptions limiting the right of contracting marriage to a less extent than now authorized by the law are abolished." But, as the Roman Church bans such marriages, under pain of excommunication, we do not see wherein it can affect the priest or nun who care enough for the church to obey its mandates.

IGNORAMUS asks: "What is a weakfish, and why is it called so?" The other name of the weakfish is the *spinetogadus*, by which it is best known in New England. Its name probably arises from the fact that its resistance was a matter of much weakness, and it is generally caught when fishing for bass, which fight hard, the contrast between the two becomes very marked, and has perpetuated the half-contemptuous name of "weakfish" first applied to it in derision. It is an excellent eating fish.

Mrs. B. M. G. Rose culture here is really but little understood. Any good standard rose may be developed into quite a tree by proper training and care. Have but one center stem of stock, and cutting out the head of this when it is at least four or five feet high. If the tree is to be a standard, bearing branches, which will droop around the head like the stems of the weeping ash. The half-hardy roses die down every winter in this climate. There is a fine line of red hardy roses, of all hues and shades, to draw upon your garden, so don't bother with the Bourbon or tropic sorts. Never buy a rose from any one but a reliable dealer, and never buy one you true to promise stock. The street dealers are not to be trusted, as a rule.

DETECTIVE. To answer your question regarding the propriety of marriage, we think we cannot do better than quote the following from the celebrated Voltair: "The more married men you have, the fewer crimes there will be; examine the frightful columns of your criminal calendars and you will there find one hundred youths executed for one father of a family."

JULIA K. When varnished walnut begins to look dingy or scratched, if you rub it up with a little sweet oil, linseed oil, or pure kerosene, the latter being considered the best, apply with a soft cloth, and the walnut will look almost as new as new; but if you put on too much it will cause the furniture to collect the dust.

STEPHEN S. The average velocity of the wind at sea is eighteen miles an hour, on land the average velocity is nine miles an hour in summer, and fourteen miles an hour in winter.

C. K. O. It is estimated that in California there are over forty thousand acres in vineyards, and the area is constantly increasing. California during the year '74 produced 12,000,000 gallons of wine, 2,000,000 pounds of grapes for table use, 250,000 pounds of raisins, besides wines and brandies, of which there is no statistics.

SPORT asks: "What time do fish feed?" Generally in the night-time. They also come out on dark days. Fish have no eyelids in which respect they resemble snakes. Like snakes they are fond of dark holes and corners and of faint lights. At all times for fishing bright moonlight is the most effective. Poachers understand this, and net and trap in the night-time with far more success than real sportsmen in the day. This, however, cannot be called sport. While in the dark, fish like other short-sighted, round-eyed animals are much attracted by a light. A torch in the bow of a boat will always bring shoals of fish toward the fisherman who can harpoon them at leisure. This method of taking fish is practiced in many parts of the world always successfully. The Chinese go out fishing on moonlight nights with white-varnished platforms along down from the side of their boats to the water's edge. The fish see these platforms glittering in the moonlight and leap on them in quantities, being scooped on board by the fishermen with landing nets, spears, oars, etc.

Unanswered questions on hand will appear next week.

MY SONG.

BY EREN E. REXFORD.

There is a song I love to sing
When falls the twilight calm,
And faeries come to drink in dew,
The blossoms' spice and balm—
A sweet and simple little song,
Whose memory seems a psalm.

A tender song of sunset skies
Along a far-off west;
A sea of gold, with argosies
Upon its yellow breast;
And roundabout the twilight's spell
Replete with dreams of rest.

But only at the twilight hour
This little song I sing;
No other time has half the rest
The twilight moments bring;
And then! about the eventide
Such dear old memories cling!

I think about the tender voice
Which sung this ballad old,
And see a face—a picture, in
A frame of dusky gold,
And lips, whose arch and crimson grace
The roses' sweetness hold.

Again she sits beside me here,
And looks upon the old
While waves are singing to the shore
In minor melody,
And asks me if I think they sing
About life's mystery.

Again we sing the ballad old,
Her mellow voice and mine
Soar upward on the evening air,
And linger on each line,
Oh, memories of the old days,
You thrill my blood like wine!

And then a solemn silence falls
As ends the ballad old,
And gloomy shadows troop across
The sunset's field of gold,
And I am all alone again,
But always, evermore.

The sad voice of the sad, sad sea
Keeps whispering to the shore
Vague yearnings for a something lost
And mourned for evermore.

Victoria:

THE HEIRESS OF CASTLE CLIFFE.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AWFUL
MYSTERY," "THE RIVAL BROTHERS," ETC.

CHAPTER VI.

KILLING THE FATTED CALF.

It is a vulgar thing to be surprised at anything in this world. Lady Agnes Shirley was too great a lady to do anything vulgar; so the common herd gathered round heard only one faint cry, and saw the strange gentleman's hands wildly grasping both the great lady's.

"Don't faint, mother. They haven't killed me in India, and it's no ghost, but your good-for-nothing son Cliffe!"

"Oh, Cliffe!—oh, Cliffe!" she cried out. "Is this really you?"

"It really is, and come home for good, if you will let me stay. Am I forgiven yet, mother?"

"My darling boy, it is I who must be forgiven, not you. How those odious people are staring! Tom, jump out, and go away. Cliffe, for Heaven's sake! get in here and drive out of this or I shall die! Oh, what a surprise this is!"

Master Tom, with his eyes starting out of his head with astonishment, obeyed, and the Indian officer laughingly took his place, touched the cream-colored ponies lightly, and off they started, amid a surprised stare from fifty pairs of eyes.

"Oh, Cliffe! I cannot realize this. When did you come? Where have you been? What have you been doing? Oh, I am dreaming, I think!"

"Nothing of the kind, *ma mere*. There is not a more wide-awake lady in England. I came here an hour ago, I have been in India fighting my country's battles, and getting made a colonel for my pains."

"My brave boy! And it is twelve years—twelve long, long years since I saw you last! Shall I ever forget that miserable morning in London?"

"Of course you will. Why not? Let bygones be bygones, as the Scots say, and I shall settle down into the most contented country gentleman you ever saw at Castle Cliffe. How do things go on at the old place?"

"Exceedingly well. I have the best agent in the world. But, Cliffe, we heard you were killed."

"Likely enough; but you may take my word for it when I tell you I was not. I was very near it, though, more than once; but that's all over now, and I'm out of the reach of bullets and sword-cuts. Who is the young lady behind?"

"You remember your uncle, Edward Shirley—well, he is dead, and that is his daughter. Wretched little creature!" said Lady Agnes, lowering her voice, and laughing contemptuously. "But I took her to keep her out of the workhouse! Drive fast, Cliffe; I am dying to get home and hear everything."

The two creamy ponies flashed like an express-train through Clifton, and along through a delightful wooded road, and drew up before two immense iron gates, swinging under a great granite arch, with the arms of Cliffe carved thereon. The huge gates were opened by a man who came out of an Italian cottage—or, at least, as near an imitation of a cottage as they can go in Italy—and which was the gate-lodge, and the ponies dashed up a spacious avenue, with grand cedars of Lebanon on either hand, for upward of a quarter of a mile. Then they crossed a great white bridge, wide enough to have half-spanned the Mississippi, and which in reality spanned an ambitious little stream you might have waded through in half a dozen steps, running sparkling through the green turf like a line of light, and disappearing among the trees. Past this the avenue ran along through a part of the grounds less densely wooded, and you saw that the rivulet emptied itself into a wide lake, lying like a great pearl set in emeralds, and with a miniature island in the center. There was a Swiss farmhouse on the island, with fowls, and children, and dogs scrambling over each other, a little white skiff drawn up on the bank, and a woman standing in the rustic porch, with a baby in her arms, and looking under the fragrant arch of honeysuckles, like a picture in a frame. Then the plantation grew denser, and the avenue lost itself in countless bypaths and windings, and there were glimpses, as they flew along among the trees, of a distant park, and deer sporting therein. Once they drove up a steep hillside, and on the top there was a view of a grand old house on another hillside, with towers, and turrets, and many gables, and no end of pinacles, and stone mullioned windows, and queer chimneys, and a great cupola, with a flag flying on the top; and further away to the left, there were the ruins of some old building, with a huge stone cross pointing up to the blue sky, amid a solemn grove of yew trees and golden willows, mingling light and shade pleasantly together. And there were

beautiful rose-gardens to the right, with bees and butterflies glancing around them, and fountains splashing like living jewels here and there, and hothouses, and greenhouses, and summerhouses, and beehives, and a perfect forest of magnificent horse-chestnuts. And further away still, there spread the ceaseless sea, sparkling as if sown with stars; and still and white beneath the rocks, there was the fisherman's village of Lower Cliffe, sweltering under the broiling seaside sun. Oh, it was a wonderful place, was Castle Cliffe!

They were down the hill in a moment, and dashing through a dark, cool beech wood. A slender gazelle came bounding along, and lifting its large, tearful, beautiful eyes, and vanishing again in affright, and Colonel Shirley uncovered his head, and reverently said:

"It is good to be home!"

Two minutes later, they were in a paved courtyard. A groom came and led away the horses, looking curiously at the strange gentleman, who smiled, and followed Lady Agnes up a flight of granite steps, and into a spacious portico. A massive hall door of oak and iron, that had swung on the same honest hinges in the days of the Tudor Plantagenets, flew back to admit them, and they were in an immense hall, carved, and paneled, and pictured, with the Cliffe coat-of-arms emblazoned on the ceiling, and a floor of bright, polished oak, slippery as glass. Up a great sweeping staircase, rich in busts and bronzes—where you might have driven a coach and four, and done it easy—into another hall, and at last into the boudoir of Lady Agnes herself—a very modern apartment, indeed, for so old a house. Brussels-carpeted, damask-curtained, with springy couches, and easy-chairs, and ottomans, and little gems of modern pictures looking down on them from the walls.

"It is good to be home!" repeated Colonel Shirley, looking round him with a little satisfied smile, as he sat down in an arm-chair; "but this room is new to me."

"Oh! I left the Agnes Tower altogether—such a dismal place, you know, and full of rats! and I had the suite to which this belongs all fitted up last year. Are you hungry, Cliffe? You must have luncheon, and then you shall tell me all the news."

With which practical remark, the lady rung, and ordered her maid to take off her things, and send up lunch. And when it came, the traveler did ample justice to the champagne and cold chicken, and answered his mamma's questions between the mouthfuls.

"Oh, there is very little to tell, after all! You know I was thrown from my horse that morning, after I left you at the hotel in London, and it was three weeks before I was able to go about again. And then I got a note from Vivian (his sunny face darkened for a moment) 'telling me she was ill—dying!' She was more—when I reached her, I found her—dead!"

But Lady Agnes was sitting, very cold, and pale, and upright, in her seat. What was the death of a French actress to her?

"There was a child—a midge of a creature, a week old, and I left it with the good people with whom she lodged, and set sail for India the next morning, a desperate man. I went on praying that some friendly bullet would put an end to a miserable existence; but I bore a charmed life; and while my comrades fell around me in scores, I scaled ramparts, and stormed breaches, and led forlorn hopes, and came off without a scratch. I would have made the fortune of any life assurance company in England!" he said, with his frank laugh.

"And the child?" said Lady Agnes, intensely interested.

"Do you really care to know anything of her?"

"It was a daughter, then? Of course I do, you absurd boy! If she lives, she is the heiress of Castle Cliffe!"

Colonel Shirley took an oyster-pate, with a little malicious smile.

"And the daughter of a French actress?"

"She is my son's daughter!" said Lady Agnes, haughtily. And, with a slightly-flushing cheek, said: "Pray, go on!"

"I sent the people who had her money, and received in return semi-annual accounts of her health for the first six years. Then they sent me word they were going to leave England, and emigrate to America, and told me to come and take the child, or send word what they would do with her. I wanted to see old England again, anyway, and I had natural feelings, as well as the rest of mankind, so I obtained leave of absence and came back to the old land. Don't look so incredulous; it is quite true!"

"And you never came to see me. Oh, Cliffe!"

"No!" said Cliffe, with some of her own coldness. "I had not quite forgotten a certain scene in a London hotel, at that time, as I have now. I came to England, and saw her a slender angel in pinafores and pantafoles, and I took her with me, and left her in a French convent, and there she is safe and well to this day."

Lady Agnes started up with clasped hands and radiant face.

"Oh, delightful! And a descendant of mine will inherit Castle Cliffe, after all! I never could bear the idea of leaving it to Margaret Shirley. Cliffe, you must send for the child, immediately!"

"But I don't think she is a child now—she is a young lady of twelve years. Perhaps she has taken the veil before this!"

"Oh, nonsense! Have you seen her since?"

"No; the superieure and I have kept up a yearly correspondence on the subject, and the young person has favored me herself with a half-dozen gilt-edged, cream-laid little French effusions, beginning, 'I embrace my dearest papa a thousand times,' and ending, 'with the most affectionate sentiments, your devoted child.' How does your ladyship like the style of that?"

"Cliffe! don't be absurd! You are just the same great boy you were twelve years ago! What is her name?"

"True! I forgot that part of it! Her good foster-mother, being at a loss for a name, took the liberty of calling her after her most gracious majesty herself, and when I brought her to the convent, I told them to add that of her mother; so Miss Shirley is Victoria Genevieve."

"What a disgrace! She ought to have been Agnes—all the Cliffes are. But it is too late now. Whom does she resemble, us or—?"

Her ladyship had the grace to pause.

"Not her mother!" said Colonel Shirley, with perfect composure. "She has blue eyes and light hair, and is not bad-looking. I will start for Paris to-morrow, if you like, and bring her home."

"No, no! I cannot part with you, after your twelve years' absence, in that fashion! I will send Mrs. Wilder, the housekeeper, and Roberts, the butler—you remember Roberts, Cliffe—and they will do, excellently. I shall not lose a moment, I am fairly dying to see her, so you must write a letter to the su-

perieure (oh, the idea of placing my granddaughter in a convent!) and Roberts and Mrs. Wilder can start in the afternoon train."

Lady Agnes could be energetic when she chose, and ink and paper were there in a moment. Cliffe laughed at his mother's impetuosity, but he wrote the letter, and that very afternoon, sure enough, the dignified housekeeper and the old family butler were steaming away on their journey to Paris.

There had not been such a sensation in Clifton for years, as there was when it became known that the lost heir had returned. Everybody remembered the handsome, laughing, fair-haired boy, who used to dance with the village girls on the green, and pat the children in the town streets on the head, and throw them pennies, and about whom there were so many romantic stories afloat. Everybody called, and the young colonel rode everywhere to see his friends, and be shaken by the hand; and Lady Agnes drove with him through Clifton, with a flush on her cheek, and a light in her eye, which had not been seen there for many a day. And at the end of the first week there was a select dinner-party in his honor, in his own ancestral hall—a very select dinner-party, indeed, where no one was present but his own relatives (all Cliffes and Shirleys) and a few very old personal friends. There was Sir Roland, of course, who had married and buried the dark-eyed cousin Charlotte, whom Lady Agnes had once wanted her son to wed, and who was now stepfather to the little boy of the golden curls we saw at the theater. The Bishop of Clifton, also, a relative, was there; and Captain Douglas was there; and Margaret and Tom Shirley, and Lord Lisle, and some half-dozen others—all relatives and connections, of course. It was a perfect *chef d'oeuvre* of a dinner-party; and Colonel Shirley, as the lion, roared amazingly, and told them wonderful stories of hunting jackals and tigers, and riding elephants and camels, and shooting natives. And Lady Agnes, in black velvet and rubies, looked like a queen. And the blue drawing-room, after dinner, was gorgeous with illumination, and arabesque, and gilding, and jewels, and perfumes, and music, and brilliant conversation. And Lady Agnes was just telling everybody about her granddaughters in the Parisian convent, expected home now every day, when there was a great bustle in the lower hall, and Tom Shirley, who had been out to see, came rushing in, in a wild state of excitement, to say that Wilder and Roberts had returned, and with them a French *bonne*, and the expected young lady herself.

It was indeed true! The rightful heiress of Castle Cliffe stood within the halls of her fathers at last.

CHAPTER VII.

MADEMOISELLE.

A MOMENT before, the drawing-room had been lively enough with music, and laughter, and conversation, and everybody felt a strong impulse to run out to the hall, and behold the daughter of Cliffe Shirley and the French actress. But it would not have been etiquette, and nobody did it except Tom Shirley, who never minded etiquette or any thing else, and the colonel, who might well be pardoned for any breach in such a case, and Lady Agnes, who rose in the middle of an animated speech, made a hasty apology, and sailed out after her son and nephew. They were standing at the head of the grand, sweeping staircase, looking down into the lower hall, with its domed roof and huge chandelier. A crowd of servants, all anxious to catch a glimpse of their future mistress, were assembled there; and right under the blaze of the pendant gas-burners, stood the travelers: Mrs. Wilder, Mr. Roberts, a coquettishly dressed lady's lady, evidently Miss Shirley's *bonne*, and, lastly, a small person in a gray cloak and little straw hat, undoubtedly Miss Shirley herself. As Lady Agnes reached the landing the travelers moved toward the staircase, and Mrs. Wilder, seeing her ladyship's inquiring face, smilingly answered it.

"Yes, my lady, we have brought her all safe; and here she is."

The little girl followed Mrs. Wilder quite slowly and decorously up the stairs, either too much fatigued or with too strong a sense of proprieties to run. It was a little thing, but it predisposed Lady Agnes—who had a horror of romps—in her favor, and they all stepped back as she came near. A pair of bright eyes under the straw hat glanced quickly from face to face, rested on the handsome colonel, and with a glad, childish cry of "Ah, *mon pere*!" the little girl flung herself into his arms. It was quite a scene.

"My dear little daughter! Welcome to your home!" said the colonel, stooping to kiss her, with a happy glow on his own face. "I see you have not forgotten me in our six years' separation!"

"Non, *mon pere*!"

The colonel pressed her again, and turned with her to Lady Agnes.

"Genevieve, say 'how do you do?' to this lady—it is your grandmother!"

"I hope madame is very well!" said Mademoiselle Genevieve, with sober simplicity, holding up one cheek, and then the other, to be saluted in very French fashion.

"What a little parrot it is!" cried Lady Agnes, with a slight and somewhat sarcastic laugh, peculiar to her. "Can you not speak English, my child?"

"Yes, madam," replied the little girl, in that language, speaking clear and distinct, but with a strong accent.

"I am glad to hear it, and I am very glad to see you, too! Are you tired, my dear?"

"No, madam; only very little."

"Then we will take this cloak and hat off, and you will stay with us fifteen minutes before you retire to your room. Come!"

The great lady took the small girl's hand and led her, with a smile on her lips, into the drawing-room. It was more a stroke of policy than of curiosity or affection that prompted the action; for one glance had satisfied Lady Agnes that the child was presentable *au naturel*, and she was anxious to display her to her friends before they could maliciously say she had been tutoring her. And the next moment Mademoiselle, fresh from the sober twilight of her convent, found herself in the full blaze of a drawing-room, that seemed filled with people and all staring at her. Half-recalling on the threshold, timid and shy, but not vulgarly so, she was drawn steadily on by the lady's strong, small hand, and heard the clear voice saying: "It is my granddaughter—let me take off your wrappings, my dear." And then, with her own fair fingers, the shrouding hat and cloak were removed, and the little heiress stood in the full glow of the lights, revealed.

Everybody paused an instant to look at her father and grandmother, who had not yet a view of her, among the rest. A slender angel, quite small for her age, with the tiniest hands and feet in the world—but then all the Cliffes had been noted for that trait—a small, pale face, very pale just now, probably from fatigue, delicate, regular features, and an utterance of light hair, of the same flaxen light-

ness as Lady Agnes' own, combed behind her ears, and confined in a thick black chenille net. Her dress was high-necked and long-sleeved, soft and gray in shade, thick and rich in texture, and slightly trimmed with peach-colored ribbons. The eyes were downcast, the little head drooping in pardonable embarrassment; and with the small, pale face, the almost colorless hair, and dingy gray dress, she did not look very dazzling, certainly. But Lady Agnes had the eye of an eagle, and she saw that, under different auspices, and in different costume, Miss Shirley was not wholly an unpromising case. She was not awkward; she might some day yet be even pretty.

All the ladies came forward to kiss her; and Miss Lisle, who saw in her already the future bride of Lord Henry, went into perfect raptures over her. Some of the gentlemen kissed her, too; foremost among whom was Master Tom Shirley, who was mentally contrasting her, to her great disadvantage, with the silver-gilt Infant Venus, on whom he had lavished his youthful affections. And yet, in the midst of all this caressing, there stood one Mordecai at the king's gate, who did not seem inclined to fall down and adore the rising star. It was Margaret Shirley, who, in amber gauze and fluttering ribbons, and creamy flowers, looked dark, and pale, and unlovely as ever; and who hung back, either from timidity or some worse feeling, until the sharp blue eyes of her aunt fell upon her.

"Margaret, come here, and embrace your cousin!" called that lady in authoritative displeasure; for Miss Margaret was no favorite at the best of times. "My dear child, this is your cousin, Margaret Shirley."

Mademoiselle, a good deal recovered from her embarrassment, raised her eyes—very large, very bright, very blue—and fixed them, with a look that had something of Lady Agnes' own piercing intensity, on the sallow and unhealthy face of cousin Margaret. A cold look came over it, as if with that glance she had conceived a sudden antipathy to her new relative, and the cheek she turned to be saluted was offered with marked reserve. Margaret murmured low some words of welcome, to which an unsmiling face and a very slight bend of the head was returned; and then she shrunk back to her grandmother, and the blue eyes went wandering wistfully round the room. They rested on those for whom she was seeking—her father's. He held out his hand with a smile, and in a twinkling the grave little face was radiant and transformed, and she was over and clinging to his arm, and looking up in his face with dancing eyes. It was quite evident that while all the rest there were mere shadows to her, seen and thought of now for the first time, *mon pere* was a vivid image in reality, beloved and dreamed of for years.

"Were you sorry to leave your convent, Genevieve?" he asked, sitting down in an arm-chair, and lifting her on his knee.

"Oh, no, papa!" she answered, readily, speaking in English, as he had done.

"And why? Your friends are all there; and here, everybody is strange."

"Not everybody, papa—you are here!"

"And she only saw me once in her life, and that's six years ago," laughed the colonel, looking down at the little face nestling against his shoulder.

"But I dreamed of you every day and every night, papa; and then your letters. Oh, those beautiful letters! I have them every one, and have read them over a thousand times!"

"My good little girl! and she loves papa, then?"

"Better than everything else in the world, papa!"

"Thank you, mademoiselle!" still laughing; "and grandmamma—you mean to love her, too, don't you?"

"*Mais certainement!*" said mademoiselle, with gravity.

"And your uncle and your cousins? There is one now—how do you think you will like him?"

Tom Shirley was standing near, with his hands in his pockets, listening with an air of preternatural solemnity to the conversation, and the colonel turned his laughing face toward him. Miss Genevieve glanced up and over Tom with calm and serious dignity.

"I don't know, papa—I don't like boys at all—that is, except Claude!"

"Who is Claude, *petite*?"

"Oh, you know, don't you? His father is Le Marquis de St. Hilary; and I spent the last vacation at the chateau, away out in the country."

"Grand connections! Who sent my little girl there?"

"I went with Ignacia—that's his sister; and we are in the same division at school. Papa," in a whisper, "is that girl over there, in the yellow dress, his sister?"

"No, *petite*—why?"

"For they have black eyes and black hair alike, only his is curly, and he is a great deal handsomer. Grandmamma said she was my cousin—is she?"

"Yes; and his."

"Does she live here?"

"Yes, they both live here. Well, what now—don't you like them?"

"I don't like her at all. Oh, how ugly she is!"

The colonel laughed and laid his hand over her lips.

"My dear Genevieve, what are you saying? It will never do for you to talk in that fashion! Maggie is the best little girl in the world, and she will be a nice companion for you to play with."

"I shan't play with her! I shan't like her at all!" said Genevieve, with decision. "What makes her live here?"

"Because she is an orphan, and has no other home, and I know you will be kind to her, Vivian. Who taught you to speak English as well as you do?"

"Oh, we had an English teacher in the convent, and a great many of the girls were English, and we used to speak it a great deal. Did I tell you in my last letter how many prizes I got at the distribution?"

"I forget—tell me again?"

"I got the first prize in our division for singing and English; the second for music and drawing, mathematics and astronomy."

"Whew!" whistled Tom, still an attentive listener. "This little midge taking the prize in mathematics! What an idea that is!"

"Can you sing and play, then?"

"Yes, papa, certainly!"

"Then, suppose you favor us with a song! I should like to hear you sing, of all things!" said the colonel, still in his half-laughing way.

"Oh, my dear Cliffe, the child must be too tired!" said Lady Agnes, sailing up at the moment, and not caring half so much for the child's fatigue as the idea that she might make a show of herself.

"I am not fatigued; but I don't like to sing before so many ladies and gentlemen, papa," whispered Miss Genevieve, blushing a little.

"Oh, nonsense! I am certain they will be delighted. Come along."

Miss Lisle having just favored the company with a Swiss composition, that had a great many "tra-la-las" at the end of each verse, closed with a shrill shriek and a terrific bang of all the keys at once, and arose from the instrument. Colonel Shirley, holding his little daughter's hand, led her reluctant and blushing, to the seat the young lady had vacated, amid a profound silence of curious expectation.

"What shall I sing, papa?" inquired mademoiselle, running her fingers lightly over the keys, and recovering her self-possession when she found herself hopelessly in for it.

"Oh! whatever you please. We are willing to be enchanted with anything."

Thus encouraged, mademoiselle played a somewhat difficult prelude from memory, and then, in a clear, sweet soprano, broke out into "Casta Diva." Her voice was rich and clear, and full of pathos; her touch highly cultivated; her expression perfect. Evidently her musical talent was wonderful, or she had the best of teachers, and an excellent power of imitation. Everybody was astonished—no one more so than papa, who had expected some simple French chansonnette, and Lady Agnes was equally amazed and delighted. The room rung with plaudits when she ceased; and, coloring visibly, Mademoiselle Genevieve rose quickly, and sought shrinking shelter under papa's wings.

"It is a most wonderful child!" said Miss Lisle, holding up her hands. "No professional could have sung it better."

"She sings well," said Lady Agnes, smiling graciously on the small performer, and patting the now hot cheek with her gold and ivory fan. "But she is tired now, and must go to rest. Tom, ring for Mrs. Wilder."

Tom rung, and Mrs. Wilder came.

"Bid your friends good-night, my dear," said Lady Agnes.

Mademoiselle did so, courtesying with the prettiest childlike grace imaginable.

"You will take her to the rose room, Mrs. Wilder, next my boudoir. Good-night, my love. Pleasant dreams!"

And Lady Agnes finished by kissing her, and turning her and the housekeeper out of the drawing-room.

"Where is Jeannette, madam?" inquired Miss Shirley, as she tripped along up another grand staircase, and through halls and corridors, beside the housekeeper.

"In your room, Miss Vivian, waiting for you."

"Is she to sleep near me? I must have Jeannette near me."

"She is to sleep in a little closet off your room. Here it is. Good-night, Miss Vivian."

But Miss Vivian did not speak. She had stopped in the doorway in an ecstasy of admiration and delight. And no wonder. In all her childish dreams of beauty, in all she had seen at the Chateau and Hotel de St. Hilary, there had never been anything half so beautiful as this. The apartment had once been Lady Agnes's study, where she received her stewards and transacted all her business; but during the last week it had been newly-furnished and fitted up for the youthful heiress. Her own rooms—bath-room, dressing-room, bedroom and boudoir—were all *en suite*, and this was the last of them. The feet sunk in the carpet of pale rose-colored velvet, sown all over with white buds and deep-green leaves; the walls were paneled in pink satin bordered with silver; and the great Maltese window was draped in rose velvet, cut in antique points. The lofty ceiling was fretted in rose and silver; and the chairs of some white wood, polished till they shone like ivory, were cushioned in the same glowing tints; so were the couches, and a great carved and gilded fauteuil, and the flashing chandelier of frosted silver, with burners shaped like lilies, had deep red shades, filling the room with rosy radiance. The bed in a distant alcove, screened with filmy-white lace curtains, was covered and gilded in the same snow-white wood; and over the head, standing on a Grecian bracket, was a beautiful statue of the "Guardian Angel," with folded wings, drooping head, outstretched arms, and smiling face. The inlaid tables were exquisite; a Bible lay on one of them, bound in gold and rose-velvet, with the name "Victoria Genevieve" in gold letters on the cover; a gilded bird-cage with two or three brilliant tropical birds therein, was pendant near the window; and over the carved mantle of Egyptian marble hung the exquisite picture of "Christ Blessing Little Children." The whole thing had been the design of Lady Agnes. Every article it contained had been critically inspected before being placed there, and the effect was perfect. In it Moore might have written "Lalla Rookh," and not even a Gadadeen could have found anything to grumble at; and little Genevieve clasped her hands in an ecstasy of speech and delight.

"It is perfect, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Jeannette, the *bonne* who had attended the little girl from Paris. "Look at this lovely dressing-cabinet and here is the wardrobe with such great mirror-doors; and in this Psyche glass I can see myself from top to toe; and here is a door at the foot of your bed opening into your grandmamma's boudoir, and this cedar closet—does it not smell deliciously!—is where I am to sleep."

"Oh, it is beautiful! There is nothing at all in Hotel de St. Hilary like it! It is like heaven!"

"Yes, mademoiselle; and your grandmamma is a very great lady; and they say down-stairs, there is not a finer house in all England than this; and that you will be the richest heiress that ever was heard of!"

"That is charming! I will sit in this great, beautiful chair, and you may take my dress off, and brush out my hair. Did you see my papa, Jeannette?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. He looks like a king!"

"

rise up and take a look at her little granddaughter asleep. So arising, she donned slippers and dressing-gown, entered the boudoir, softly opened the door of communication between it and her little girl's room, and looked in. And there a surprise awaited her! Instead of finding mademoiselle fast asleep among the pillows, something half-dressed, a fairy in a white undershirt and loose sack, stood with her back toward her, trying—yes, actually trying to make the bed! But the ambitious effort was unavailing, the small arms could by no means reach half-way across, and the little hands could by no effort shake up the mighty sea of down; and, with a long-drawn sigh, the heiress of the Shirleys gave up the attempt at last. Then she went to the basin, washed her face and hands, brushed out the profusion of her pale hair, and then coming back, knelt down under the "Guardian Angel," crossed herself devoutly, and with clasped hands and upraised eyes began to pray. The child looked almost lovely at that moment, in her loose drapery, her unbound, falling hair, her clear, pale face, clasped hands and uplifted earnest eyes. But Lady Agnes was a great deal too stupefied at the whole extraordinary scene to think of admiration, or even think at all, and could do nothing but stand there and look on. A quarter of an hour passed, the little girl did not stir; half an hour passed, the little saint prayed still; when the door of the cedar closet opened, and out came Jeannette. Genevieve finished her devotions and arose.

"Now, mademoiselle, what have you been about? You have never been trying to make that bed?"

"Yes, I have though, but I couldn't do it! It's so very large you see, Jeannette."

"Mademoiselle, I am surprised at you! What would your grandmamma say if she knew it?"

Mademoiselle opened her bright blue eyes in undisguised surprise.

"Knew what? What have I done?"

"You are not to make beds, mademoiselle!" said Jeannette, laughing. "I am sure your grandmamma does not expect you to do anything of the sort."

"But I have always done it. We all made our own beds in the convent, except the very little ones."

"Well, this is not a convent, but a castle; and you know, mademoiselle Vivie, there is a proverb that we must do in Rome as the Romans do. So you need not do it any more, or they'll think you have been a housemaid in France; and another thing, what in the world do you get up so early for?"

"Early! Why the sun is rising, and we always got up before the sun, in the convent!"

"The convent! the convent! Please to remember you are not in a convent now, mademoiselle, and sunrise is a very early hour. There is not one up in the house, I believe, but ourselves."

"I don't care for that, I shall get up as early as I please, unless papa or grandmamma prevent it, and I don't think they will. So here, curl my hair and say no more about it."

Jeannette twined the flaxen tresses over her fingers and let them fall in a shining shower to the child's waist. Then a dress of fresh white muslin was brought out and put on, a sash of broad blue ribbon knotted round the little waist; and Lady Agnes, from her watching-place, allowed, what she could not last night, that her granddaughter was pretty.

"Now," said mademoiselle, tying her straw hat over her pretty curls, "I saw some lovely rose-gardens out of the window, and you must come with me to see them. Do you think you can find your way to the door? It is such a great house this!"

"I will see. Come along!"

The two went out of the rose room; and Lady Agnes, having got the better of her amazement, laughed her low and sarcastic laugh, and went back to her own bedchamber.

"It is a prodigy—this small granddaughter of mine, and so French! I am afraid she takes after that dreadful French actress, though: *Dieu merci!* she does not look like her. Well, if they have taught her nothing worse than getting up at sunrise in her French convent, they have done no harm at all; but what an extraordinary child it is, to be sure! She took to that exhibition of herself quite naturally last evening—the French actress again. And that odious name of Genevieve! I wish I could have her christened over again and called Agnes; but I suppose Victoria will do for want of a better."

The young lady thus apostrophized was meantime having a very good time, out among the rose-gardens and laurel walks. Jeannette had found her way through some side-door or other. And now the little white fairy, with the blue ribbons, and fluttering flaxen curls, was darting hither and thither among the parterres like some pretty white bird. Now she was watching the swans sailing serenely about in the mimic lakes; now she was looking at the goldfish glancing in the fountains; now she was lost in admiration of a great peacock, strutting up and down on one of the terraces with the first rays of sunshine sparkling on his outspread tail—a tail which its owner evidently admired quite as much as the little girl; now she was hunting squirrels; now she was listening to the twittering of the birds in the beechwood and through the shrubbery; now she was gathering roses and carnations to make bouquets for papa and grandmamma, and anon she was running up and down the terraces with dress, and ribbons, and curls streaming in the wind, a bloom on her cheek, and a light in her eye, and a blooming, elastic life in every step, that would make one's pulses leap from sympathy only to look at her. The time went by like magic. Even the staid Jeannette so far forgot the proprieties as to be seduced into a race up and down the green lanes between the chestnut trees, and coming flying back, breathless and panting, Genevieve ran plump into the arms of the colonel, who stood on the lawn laughing, and smoking his matin cigar.

"You wild gipsy! Is this the sort of thing they have been teaching you in your sober convent? At what unchristian hour did you rise this morning? and who are those bouquets for?"

"One is for you, papa; and I've been out here three hours, and I am so—so hungry!" laughing merrily and pressing the hand he held out for the flowers.

"That's right! stick to that if you can, and you will not need any rouse—your cheeks are redder now than your roses. There! they are in my button-hole, and while I smoke my cigar down the avenue, do you go in with your *bonne* and get some bread and milk."

Vivie ran off after Jeannette, and a housemaid brought them the bread and milk into the breakfast-parlor. Like all the rooms in the house, it was handsome, and handsomely furnished; but Vivie saw only one thing—a portrait over the mantel of Master Cliffe Shirley at the age of fifteen. He wore the costume of a young Highland chief—a plumed bonnet on his princely head, a plaid of Rob

Roy tartan over his shoulders, and a bow and arrow in his hand. The handsome, laughing face, the bright, frank, cheery eyes, the beamy locks, peculiarly becoming dress, gave the picture a fascination that riveted the gaze of even of strangers. Lady Agnes Shirley, cold, hard woman of the world, had wept a heart-broken tear over that splendid face in the Indian sky; and now his little daughter dropped on one knee before it, and held up her clasped hands with a cry:

"Oh, my handsome papa! Everything in this place is beautiful, but he is the best of all!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 269.)

The Terrible Truth:

OR,
THE THORNHURST MYSTERY.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,
AUTHOR OF "STRANGELY WED," "THE FALSE WIDOW," "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," "CORAL AND RUBY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VERDICT.

THE sound of the pistol-shot cut into a momentary silence which had fallen upon the throng of guests. They had stood still with one accord as the hour struck, and that sharp report ringing through the house thrilled quick terror into every heart. Nora, white as the dress she wore, sprang for the door; Sir Rupert almost as quick followed, and while the crowd rushed here and there in aimless panic, those two were first to gain the library, to witness the sight waiting them there.

The colonel's grand old face was upturned to the light—a white, dead face, with eyelids fallen, and a repose upon it which had not been there in the last moments of his life. It was as if death had brought to him alone the true knowledge of these later troubles which had imbibed his existence, as if even in death he had sent back the forgiveness which would never now be spoken.

A single stain of blood ensanguined his shirt-front, but not a breath flickered, not a pulse quivered, as Sir Rupert bent above the prostrate form.

For the first time in all her healthy, buoyant life, Nora fainted dead away. She was carried above stairs to her own chamber and left in charge of the attendants summoned. Mrs. Sholto Hayes was in violent hysterics, and half the ladies present reduced to a state of shocked and terrified helplessness. Mrs. Grahame's nerve and habitual self-command were brought out as perhaps they had never been brought out in all her life before. Her contained example did much to restrain the guests from those violent expressions of horror and confusion which so generally prevail at any great catastrophes.

The crowd was kept back from the library. A half-dozen gentlemen, among them a physician, were shut within the room. A single glance was sufficient. Death had been instantaneous, and it was impossible, had it been desired, to keep the truth from the people about.

It was the colonel's old enemy, Walter Montrose, who broke the tidings to the shivering guests. Colonel Vivian had been shot through the heart, dead—murdered in the security of his own home, surrounded by a host of friends. At a hint from him the gentlemen present dispersed quickly through the grounds and followed the different outlets to a considerable distance in search of the perpetrator of the deed. A messenger was dispatched to the county authorities, a telegram was sent to the chief of police, Pittsburg, another to New York, calling for the best detectives in the force, all within two hours' time.

The first hurried search of the grounds revealed no trace of the criminal. The tramp of many feet obliterated any trace of individual footprints which might have borne individual to skilled sight. One gentleman, examining every inch of the space within which the assassin must have stood, presently caught the glitter of a substance foreign to the snow, half buried in it, under the edge of the piazza. It was a small, silver-mounted pistol, which must have been flung there from the hand of the assassin.

"Great God!" cried Telford, sharply, at sight of it. "It is young Vivian's."

Dare pushed through the crowd at that. He was very pale and very collected, as he always was, in the face of a great emergency.

He had been first and most eager in the search, but at the sight of the little evil-powered instrument, a rush of emotion mastered him.

"Oh, how unfortunate!" he exclaimed.

"This will witness against him where there would have been no other witness."

Glances were exchanged. Mere surmises of suspicion which had been whispered before rose into demands now. No one was ignorant of the terms existing between father and son, and the pistol had the initials of the latter graven upon its plate. Three young men present declared they had seen it at different periods in Vane Vivian's hands. Had he been there?

Made suddenly aware of his indiscretion, so it seemed, tortures would not have wrung another syllable from Dare. He had loved him like a brother, the people said among themselves; it was natural he should wish to shield him now. They honored him for his silence, and at the same moment, for the sake of justice, congratulated themselves that a power higher than his will would force him to speak, sooner or later.

Sir Rupert Archer turned sick at heart as he took a glance at the telltale weapon. He did not waver in the loyalty of his friendship for Vane; all the evil appearances which he realized might be brought to bear did not instill a doubt into his mind.

Soon the lights which had flashed hither and thither through the grounds went out. Carriages rolled away, one by one. Silent forms moved through the dimness of the great house now; the faded and drooping reminders of the late festivities were like mockeries, with those pale faces and solemn whispers stirring in the rooms. Daybreak brought the county officials to examine the place, to take such steps as might be in pursuing the criminal.

It was a strange, unnatural house, with the sound of heavy feet coming and going. It all seemed like some frightful nightmare to Nora, as she sat in her shadowed chamber, the dread spectacle of her guardian stricken suddenly lifeless always before her.

Sir Rupert had inquired at her door during the morning. Dare had been there for the third time, but forbore to intrude his presence. She was left alone except for a few moments Mrs. Grahame came in to sit with her.

There was an inquest held. The coroner, with a jury of twelve picked men, took possession of the library. Witnesses had been sum-

moned from among guests present on the preceding evening, and members of the household. The business was conducted quietly, and with as much dispatch as was consistent with the nature of the evidence presented.

Sir Rupert Archer sworn. Had been among the guests in one of the drawing-rooms, the one fronting the west. Had heard the report of the pistol just as the clocks concluded the stroke of twelve. Had defined the sound as proceeding from the vicinity of the library. Was familiar with the interior of the mansion. Had rushed immediately thither, was the second person to enter; the first had been Miss Carteret. Had stooped over the body of the deceased, had looked up, saying—"The colonel is dead." Had caught Miss Carteret as she fainted, and carried her from the room. Had joined in the search subsequently, but had discovered nothing. Had not been aware of any suspicious person lurking about the premises during the day or evening. Mr. Walter Montrose had been among the first persons to enter the library after himself; could not say positively he was the first.

Mr. Montrose was not upon the witness-list; he was not present. Owen Dare volunteered that he had been the third person to enter the room. His testimony was in substance a repetition of the baronet's, with the exception that he had stepped from the parlors and stood in the south hall as he counted the strokes, was standing there when the pistol-shot alarmed him. Had not positively defined the position of the sound, but hurried back, and seeing the library door open, entered.

Several others were sworn with but slight variations of the same testimony. Mr. Frederick James sworn, and in addition testified to the finding of a pistol engraved with the initials "V. V.," accurately describing its position when found. Mr. Telford identified the pistol as one previously in the possession of deceased's son.

Sir Rupert Archer, recalled, admitted unwillingly to believing it the property of his friend. Had Vane Vivian been at Thornhurst on the preceding night to his knowledge? He had. Had Sir Rupert spoken with him? No. What were the terms between deceased and his son? Sir Rupert declined to answer. Was an animosity entertained which might lead to the commission of such a crime? On the part of the son positively not.

Mr. Owen Dare, recalled, also recognized the pistol as having belonged to Vane Vivian. Had been aware of the latter's presence upon the premises. Asked to relate what he knew of it. Unwillingly stated: he had stepped out of the heat to enjoy a cigar upon the veranda; had his attention attracted by a muffled female form crossing the lawn; a little curious to know the meaning of the appearance he had sauntered after and seen her join a man under the elms. He had been near enough to recognize the two as Miss Carteret and Vane Vivian, and immediately retired, himself unseen. After a few moments' stroll in the shrubbery he returned to the veranda intending to enter as he had emerged through the library. Was checked by the sound of voices within, and unintentionally overheard a fragment of conversation between the colonel and a person he had seen drive to the door. Did the conversation have any bearing upon the subsequent occurrences of the evening? Mr. Dare could not say.

Did it throw any imputation against young Vivian calculated to prejudice the father's mind? It did. Would he repeat what he had heard? Objected to, and the question was not pressed. He had been much in the company of deceased's son during the past two years; what had been the character of the latter? Very much the same of all young men of the world nowadays, a little wild, but a generous friend. Had not been profligate to an extreme, desperate and reckless? Very unwillingly admitted he had been all of these. Mr. Dare was permitted to withdraw again.

It had not been deemed necessary to draw the ladies into this painful scene, and their evidence it was supposed would merely corroborate that already given, but now, after a whispered conference, it was decided that Miss Carteret must be called. Sir Rupert Archer went for her and she appeared below, a few moments later, looking woefully ill, her face like colorless marble, her eyes haggard. She was sworn and a chair placed for her by the corner, who observed how weak she appeared, but gave her evidence in a clear, concise manner.

She had met Mr. Vivian under the elms; was not positive of the time; thought it something after eleven. She had gone out of her own accord to say good-by and assure him of her sympathy under recent misfortunes.

He had expressed no bitterness against anyone in her hearing, certainly not against his father. Had admitted he deserved the latter's anger, and had come down to Thornhurst to sue for his forgiveness. The colonel had been very bitterly incensed against his son, influenced she believed by exaggerated if not false reports of the latter's conduct which had been given him. The coroner begged Miss Carteret would confine herself to facts, not opinions. She was closely questioned, and while her own belief in Vane's innocence was apparent, her evidence strengthened the appearances against him.

The examination lasted the greater part of the day. At last the coroner summed up the evidence, spoke of the ill-terms existing between father and son, of the reckless, desperate character of the latter, of the evil habits to which it was known he was addicted, made a spirited appeal to the sense of justice which must reign in each good citizen's breast, spoke of the rapidity with which crime was advancing not merely among the low and vicious but in our best families, like the instance now being discussed, that vice was corrupting our young men, evil proclivities and associations dragging them down to the level of ruffians and assassins. The verdict returned after a short delay was:

Deceased had come to his death from effect of a pistol-shot fired by the hand of his son, Vane Vivian.

Before night a warrant had been issued for the arrest of the young man. Messages went flashing over the wires to New York and other principal points, accurate descriptions of his appearance and dress were given, the brand of murderer was set upon, and the subtle power of the law put in force against him.

Mr. Walter Montrose walked home from Thornhurst at two o'clock of New Year's morning. The stars and the moon had been blotted out by inky blackness before this; the clouds that had been scattered during the earlier part of the night were massed overhead, and the snow was falling fast in great damp, clinging flakes. He had learned of his daughter's departure before leaving the mansion. No light broke the vague outline of the old house as he approached it, and he stamped into the blackness of the narrow passage, paused there to fumble for a lucifer, lit a candle and proceeded to the door of her room.

She opened to him immediately. She had

not undressed and had a portion of her outdoor wraps still about her.

"Not gone to bed, Venetia, and in the dark and cold? You indulge strange, not to say uncomfortable, tastes. Can you make your arrangements to-morrow instead of the following morning?"

"What has happened?" she asked, a vague fear oppressing her as she read some unusual expression in his face.

"A very terrible occurrence. I am quite shaken from it yet. Colonel Vivian was shot, killed instantly, by an assassin from without his house. I have no great cause to mourn for him, but I don't know another person whose sudden death would have given me such a shock. There'll be an inquest and any amount of troublesome detective business, and I am one of those present might be detained as a witness. I don't want to be mixed with the affair; I couldn't be of any good if I were, and it is an unpleasant sort of notoriety to attach, even in a remote degree, to any one."

"Is any one suspected?" she asked.

"No." Mr. Montrose had left before the finding of the pistol. "It was the act of a cowardly ruffian, and chances are probably more than equal against ever detecting him. To the question again, can you pack and be fit to travel by the earliest morning train?"

"Yes, papa."

"With nothing more onerous in the way of leaving things in charge than turning the key in the lock, this place may be trusted to take care of itself. Get a wink of sleep if you can, Venetia; you'll be fagged out before our journey is at an end."

Venetia moved about her preparations with an awe from the tragedy enacted so near fallen upon her, but withal glad of this sudden departure, which spared her the chance of again seeing either the baronet or Dare.

When that verdict against Vane Vivian was rendered, the one person who could have cleared him from suspicion was two hundred miles from Thornhurst, and, though neither of them knew it then, it was to be long years before the Montroses, father and daughter, would set foot in that Western Pennsylvania region again.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE READING OF THE WILL.

THREE days later the funeral cortege wended its way slowly out of Thornhurst. It was a dreary overcast day with fine snow whirling up under the horses' feet, when the desolation of grief marked by the hearse with its sable plumes and the long procession of mourning friends seemed echoed through earth and sky. The frozen clogs fell with their first hollow sound upon the coffin-lid. Colonel Seymour Vivian, brave old soldier, lion-hearted, passionate, generous, noble with all his faults, was leveled to the lot of all mankind. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust"—with his virtues and his faculties the old man was at rest.

Back to the desolate house again, which, less than a week ago, had been the seat of mirth, filled with thoughtless, gay creatures, every corner echoing with the life and happiness within. A gloom was over all now, untold horrors haunted every shadowed nook, every cautious footfall and low-voiced word was but the ghost of a sound stirring the dreary space.

Mr. Grahame, in company with Sholto Norton Hayes, had come down from the city to attend the obsequies; with them had come Colonel Vivian's lawyer, and the little party remaining at Thornhurst assembled in the library late in the afternoon of that same day. Sir Rupert Archer had taken up his quarters, for the time, at the hotel in the village. Dare retained his place in the mansion.

The company had assembled to hear the reading of the will, hastened to accommodate the return of those gentlemen whose business would take them back immediately to New York. Whispered surmises had been indulged whether or not the colonel had put his avowed intention into effect, whether he had made a new will, disinheriting his son, and in that case who might be the fortunate legatee. The two ladies, Mrs. Grahame and Mrs. Hayes, were the nearest relatives after Vane, and the grief of each displayed by craped folds and black-bordered handkerchiefs was not so intense but they had speculated hopefully upon their individual chances. Visions of the city house rejuvenated, of the new lustrous silks and royal velvets and flashing diamonds which became her so well, had crowded into Mrs. Grahame's mind in the very midst of the morning service and solemn duty. Similar visions of a new establishment half a mile further up-town, a brown stone palace surrounded by brown stone palaces, such a place as had been outside the limit of that moderate eighty thousand which did not quite remove her from the realms of the parvenu, awoke all the energy which was capable of being aroused in Mrs. Sholto Hayes. Who will blame them? It is always the way; life is a lottery; and Death very often deals out the winning ticket.

Fluttering hopes fell at the date of the will—"October 1st., 1867." Two years before, immediately after the departure of Vane Vivian for Europe, while the colonel's pride in him was strongest, and the noble old estate would go to the profligate that had been, the miserable criminal fleeing from justice that was, for, in the minds of the community and of these blood relations of his own Vane Vivian was prejudged.

There were legacies, five thousand dollars each to Mrs. Grahame and Mrs. Hayes. (Blasted were all the fairy visions of new equipments and brown stone palaces!) Two thousand dollars to his son's friend, Owen Dare. A thousand dollars each to the butler and housekeeper, who had grown old in his service, some smaller legacies, and then:

The residue of all his estates, monies, and personal property, was bequeathed to his ward, Lenore Carteret, on condition that she should become contracted in marriage with his only beloved son, Vane Vivian. In default of her personal property and monies in fund, to be divided as thereafter named, should revert to his son, the remainder as thereafter specified to go to his ward as a token of his past friendship and affection for her father, Edwin Carteret, and his love for herself.

Then followed a minute description of personal effects and their division, with Richard Grahame appointed as his executor, to whom was bequeathed the sum of five thousand dollars to cover such trouble and inconvenience as he might encounter in carrying out the wishes therein conveyed.

Duly signed and attested according to law. There was a little flutter, a little murmur, checked suddenly as the lawyer proceeded to unfold another document, and announced:

"Codicil to the foregoing will and testament of Seymour Vivian, dated December 10th, 1869."

Hopeful expectations in the ascendant again. In addition to the legacies already bequeathed to Mrs. Grahame and Mrs. Hayes ten thousand dollars each, a total of fifteen thousand each.

In addition to two thousand dollars bequeathed to Owen Dare three thousand more, a total of five thousand dollars.

The foregoing disposition of all remaining estates, monies and personal property revoked, and all bequeathed unconditionally to his beloved ward and adopted daughter in his affections, Lenore Carteret, to her and her heirs and assigns forever. In case of his decease during her minority Richard Grahame was appointed as her guardian, and finally in addition to said Richard Grahame, to act jointly as executors and trustees, Sholto Norton Hayes, and a final bequest of ten thousand dollars each as a token of good will and recompense for trouble attending the business devolving upon them, and a yearly allowance to the appointed guardian of Lenore Carteret for whatever time, if any, she might remain an inmate of his house and home.

Attested and signed.

"Such, ladies and gentlemen," concluded the lawyer, laying down the document, "are the last wishes of our deceased friend, Colonel Vivian. It will not require for me to urge that they may be sacredly observed. Let me be the first to congratulate Miss Carteret upon her accession to princely wealth, and to hope that my own connection in a business way with the owner of Thornhurst may continue in the future as it has been in the past."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 262.)

Overland Kit:

OR,
THE IDYL OF WHITE PINE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," "WOLF DEMON," "WHITE WITCH," ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FLY-LEAF.

NATURALLY, all within the room were a little astonished at the sudden and unexpected appearance of the landlady of the Eldorado. But her presence at the door of the shanty is easily explained. Like all the rest, she had followed Judge Jones and his prisoner. Instead of entering the house, however, she had remained outside at the door. The door being ajar, she could easily overhear all that took place within the room.

For a moment, a dark and lowering frown clouded the face of the Judge. It was caused by the sudden appearance of the girl, but speedily it passed away. All eyes being turned upon Jennie, none noticed it but the girl herself. It did not escape her sharp eyes, and she understood the cause of the Judge's anger. But she advanced within the room with a light step and an upright carriage.

"You have the book?" the Judge questioned.

"Yes; I'll bring it if you want it," Jennie replied.

"If you will be so kind, Miss Jennie," the Judge said, blandly, but there was a look in his eyes that plainly revealed to the girl the bitter anger that was in his heart.

"I'm going to bring the book, Dick, because it may help you to have this fellow—" and the girl glanced contemptuously at the witness, Joe Rain—"bound down by oath; perhaps it will keep him to the truth. I heard 'em when they asked for it first, but I wouldn't say anything, for I thought that if they didn't get it, they wouldn't be able to go on; but since they are to put the thing through, *anyway*, why, it is better to have 'em swear to what they say."

"Thank you, Jennie," replied Dick, a slight tinge of color flushing his cheeks. "I shan't forget your kindness."

There was very little expression in his voice, small meaning in his words, but there was a look in his clear blue eyes that made the heart of the girl leap for joy.

"I'll bring it right away, Judge!" Jennie cried, hastily, and she ran out of the shanty.

The Judge leaned his head on his hands, hiding his face from view; he felt that he could not conceal the rage that was burning in his heart.

The crowd gathered in little knots, discussing the strange occurrences of the last few hours.

The witness, Joe Rain, leaned on the edge of the Judge's table, and looked around him with a stolid face.

Talbot stood upright, straight as a pine tree, folded his arms over his breast, and with his gaze fixed afar off on vacancy, lost himself in thought, and by the smile that appeared upon his lips, one would have guessed that his thoughts were of a pleasant nature.

"That gal's a trump!" said Bill, emphatically. "She wasn't a-goin' to produce the Testament when she thought a-holdin' of it back would help Dick; but the minnit she found that a-fotchin' it out would be good for him, she goes for it thar an' then."

"Taint any use to swear that cuss," growled Jim; "he'll lie, anyhow."

"Begorra! he's like a cousin of mine in County Kerry," chimed in the Irishman, Patsey—"a cousin, four times removed, d'ye mind; he was such a great devil to swear that he'd swear the legs from off an iron pot, or a hole through a tin sauce-pan, an' think no more of it than of 'ating his praties, bad 'cess to him!"

"Look-a-hyer! You're kinder pilin' it on, ain't ye?" questioned Bill, doubtfully.

"By the piper that played before Moses! It's the honest truth I'm sp'akin'," affirmed the Irishman. "Shure, he'd swear that black was white, an' that white was no color at all."

"Say, Judge, kin I hev a word with Dick?" asked the Red-Dogite, abruptly.

"I see no objection," replied Jones, raising his head for a moment.

Jim approached Talbot.

"Say, Dick," he said, mysteriously, in a low tone, "I've got a question fur to ask you; will you answer it?"

"Yes, of course, if I can."

"Oh, you kin, easy 'nuff," replied Dandy Jim. "Now, on yer word of honor, old pard—'hope I may die,' an' all that sort of thing—what were your hand word when these fellers went for you up in the Gully?"

Talbot laughed at the question, asked with so many words.

"A pair of queens," he said.

"And I had two leetle pair!" exclaimed the man-from-Red-Dog, in disgust. "Why, I would have raked the pile. Durn their skins, why didn't they wait until we played the hand out?" And then Jim retired, growling to himself.

With a face glowing with excitement, Jennie re-entered the room, carrying a little Bible in her hand.

"There it is, Judge," she said, placing it on the table. Then she retired a little way, and mingled with the crowd, the men respectfully making room for her.

"Thank you, Miss Jennie," said the Judge, politely, raising his head from the shade of his

hands, and pushing the book toward the witness. "You solemnly swear that the evidence you are about to give in this—"

"Oh, Judge!" cried Jimmie, suddenly, her face in a flame.

The Judge, thus interrupted, stopped in his speech, and looked at the girl in astonishment. Her face was as red as fire, and she was trembling with excitement.

"What is it?" Jones asked, in astonishment. "My Bible, please—for a moment—I forgot something," and Jimmie advanced to the table, her outstretched hand nervous with a strange agitation.

"Certainly," said Judge Jones, perplexed at the unaccountable excitement of the girl. Thoroughly astonished, Jones handed the book to her.

Opening it with a hand that shook like an aspen leaf, Jimmie tore out the fly-leaf of the book. The keen eyes of the Judge detected that there were two short lines written on the page. Jimmie crumpled the leaf up in her hand, thrust it hastily into her bosom, and then, replacing the book on the table, retreated to her former position among the crowd.

Of course, her motive was plain to all within the room. There was something written in that book that she did not wish other eyes to see.

The Judge administered the oath to the witness, and then proceeded to question him.

"What is your name?"

"Joe Rain."

"Your business?"

"Haven't any at present."

"What was your former occupation?"

"Road-agent."

There was a visible sensation among the inmates of the room at this declaration.

"When you say 'road-agent' you mean that you were a robber—highwayman?" questioned the Judge.

"Yes," replied the witness.

"Had you companions in your robberies?"

"Yes—two."

"Name them."

"Jimmie Mullen and Overland Kit."

"Overland Kit was your captain?"

"Yes."

"Where did you part with him last?"

"In a cave that we had as a hidin'-place up in the mountains. The captain said the country was gettin' too hot to hold us, and that we must disband. He divided the plunder, and we separated."

"Would you know Overland Kit if you should see him now?"

"Yes," answered Joe, promptly.

"Look around you."

The witness did so.

"Is Kit in this room?"

"Yes."

"Point him out."

"That's the man—the fellow you call Dick Talbot," and Joe pointed directly to the prisoner.

A murmur of astonishment filled the room at this direct accusation.

"You are certain that yonder man is Overland Kit, the leader of the road-agents?" said the Judge, slowly.

"I am swearin' to it," replied Joe, confidently.

"Prisoner, you are at liberty to ask the witness any question that you like," said the Judge, the expression upon his face fully betraying his belief that he had Talbot in a tight place.

"Well, I would like to ask a few, Judge," Dick said, calmly. "Hasn't Overland Kit a full black beard and long black hair?"

"Yes," answered Joe, readily, an insolent smile upon his face.

"Yet I wear no beard except this chin-piece, and my hair is short, curly, and brown in color."

"That's because when you called yourself Overland Kit, you wore a wig and a beard of false hair. I'm sorry for you, cap, but I've got yer. I saw yer in the river-road yesterday, heard you speak, and knew that you war my meat in a twinklin'!" exclaimed Joe, with a leer of defiance.

"This court will now adjourn," said the Judge; "the evidence fully warrants my holding you prisoner on this charge. To-morrow you shall have a formal trial. In my mind, however, from the evidence, there is no doubt about your guilt."

CHAPTER XXII.

GIRL OR WOMAN.

SLOWLY the little crowd emerged from the shanty, the preliminary examination over, and Dick Talbot held a prisoner, accused of being the notorious road-agent, Overland Kit.

It was arranged that the express-office was to serve as Talbot's prison, guarded by the four men who had volunteered to go with the Judge in his expedition to Gopher Gully, that had resulted so unluckily to Injun Dick.

Joe Rain, the witness, was taken to another shanty near by, also placed under guard, with strict injunctions that no one should have communication with him. The Judge did not intend that the important witness for the government should be tampered with in the interim that intervened before the hour of the trial.

Judge Jones was leaving nothing undone to secure a conviction. The motive that urged him on was powerful indeed.

Talbot, within the shanty, was left alone to reflect upon the unexpected course of events.

Without the express office was guarded by the four volunteers, revolver in hand.

Ginger Bill, the stage-driver, and Patsey, the Irishman, guarded the back of the shanty and the side of it looking to the north, while the two other miners guarded the front and the south side.

"I say, Patsey, the idea of the Judge askin' for a good book among such a crowd of rough cusses as we are! If it hadn't 'a' bin for showin' disrespect, I'd 'a' haw-hawed right out."

"Faix an' I'm near doin' that same meself," said the Irishman. "To be askin' the likes of us for a book, good or bad. Barrin' the gurl's I don't believe there's a book in the camp."

"You don't want to gamble on that, my gentle friend from Cork, or you'll get flaxed like thunder," Bill remarked. "I've got a book in my pocket now."

"Is it the likes of yees that would be after readin'?" exclaimed the Irishman, incredulously.

"Let yer eyes go tur it," replied Bill, majestically drawing a small and well-thumbed volume from his pocket.

By the light of the moon, now shining dimly in the heavens, Patsey looked at the book, which, to the stage-driver, was a treasure.

"Barrin' the Dime Novels—The Red Coyote," said Patsey, spelling out the title. "Oh! I've heered of thim."

"Bill!" said a low, cautious voice.

The two men turned in astonishment. Forth from the shelter of the shade cast by a neighboring house came the girl, Jimmie. She advanced to where the two men stood. They looked at her in amazement.

"Why, Jimmie, what are you doing hyer?" Bill asked.

The face of the girl was pale, and the red

circles around her swollen eyes told that she had been weeping. Even the not over keen eyes of the two men detected the traces of suffering so evident.

"I want to see Dick," the girl said, plaintively.

"Well, I don't know," Bill replied, dubiously.

"I must see him, Bill!" she cried, excitedly.

"Say, Jimmie, you ain't a-goin' to fix things so he kin git away, are you? 'cos I gave my word for to watch him like a thousand of bricks."

"How can I aid him to escape?" Jimmie asked, mournfully.

"I only want to speak to him, that's all. He may want somebody to come and speak for him at his trial. Judge Jones has got a spite against Dick; I know the reason of it, too. He don't intend that Dick shall have a fair show, if he can help it. Dick was always a friend of yours, Bill; ain't you willing to help him a little, now that he has got into trouble?"

"You bet!" cried Bill, emphatically.

"Then let me speak to Dick through that window there. You can keep a watch on me; he can't escape, even if he wants to, with you two here, with your revolvers."

"True for yees," said Patsey, quickly; "let the gurl see him; where's the harm?"

"That's so; sail in, Jimmie; but, I say, the window is always fastened inside," Bill remarked.

"Yes, I know that, but I unfastened it when I was inside during the examination," Jimmie replied. "I thought that, perhaps, I might get a chance to speak to Dick."

Bill gave vent to a low whistle. The forethought of the girl rather astonished him.

"All right; go in, lemons."

Jimmie did not wait for a second bidding, but hurried forward toward the house.

"Did yees hear the gurl speak about our revolvers?" asked Patsey. "Begorra! I never had a revolver but once, an' thim 'twas a bowie-knife."

Jimmie, catching hold of the window-sash—the window, which was a small one, swung on hinges to one side—pulled it open. Talbot advanced to the window, and could not repress an exclamation of surprise when he beheld the eager face of the girl.

With a cry of joy, Jimmie threw her arms around Dick's neck, and pillowed her head upon his breast. For a few moments, sobs shook the slight frame of the girl, and the tear-drops came freely from the large eyes that seldom sought the consolations found in weeping.

Talbot drew the girl tenderly to his breast.

"Why, Jimmie, are you crying? I never saw you cry before, in all my life," he said, softly.

With a great effort, she forced back her sobs, and raised her tear-wet eyes to his.

"I don't ever remember crying before, since I was a little girl," she said, in a voice broken by emotion. "I s'pose all the cry that ought to have come before, has come now, just like the spring floods in the Reese. Oh, Dick! I feel so bad!" and again the little head, crowned with the rare-tinted red-gold locks, went down upon his breast, and the convulsive sob checked the voice of the girl, as she clung closely to Dick, and pillowed her head on the heart of the only friend she had in all the world.

Dick wound his arms still tighter around the girl, and drew the little trembling form still nearer to him.

"You poor child!" he murmured, kissing the golden hair, the glory of the shapely little head.

"I never saw you so agitated before, Jimmie; you've always been such a—such a little man, so plucky and full of spirit," Dick was hesitating for words to express his meaning.

"That's just the way I don't want you to think of me!" exclaimed Jimmie, her voice broken by sobs.

"Not think of you that way?" said Dick, in astonishment.

"No; I ain't a little man; am I?" questioned Jimmie, still sobbing.

"Why, no, of course not," replied Talbot, rather perplexed by the strange behavior of the girl.

With a determined effort, Jimmie once more choked back her sobs. Again she raised her eyes, and looked into the face of the man to whose breast she clung.

"What am I?" she asked, abruptly.

"Eh?" questioned Talbot, in amazement.

"Don't I speak plain, Dick?" she cried, impatiently, the tears again gathering in her large eyes.

"What am I if a bear—a hog?"

"No, no," interrupted Dick; "you are a very pretty little girl."

"Nothing else?" demanded Jimmie, pouting.

"Why, yes; a very good little girl."

"Nothing, but a girl?" interrupted Jimmie, pouting still more.

"What else would you be?" asked Talbot, in wonder.

"What you can't see that I am; a woman!" exclaimed the girl, in an aggrieved tone.

"A woman?"

"Yes; I'm sixteen; and I'm a great deal older than that in knowledge—at least so everybody says."

"And you want me to look upon you as a woman rather than as a child?" Talbot asked, a strange expression upon his face.

"Yes," replied Jimmie, promptly.

"Then I mustn't let you do this any more."

"Do what?" Jimmie asked, in wonder.

"Why, let you cling to my breast as you are clinging now; I mustn't kiss you any more, or smooth your hair back from your forehead. Such acts of familiarity, which may be permitted with the child, are improper with the woman."

"And you can't pet me any more?" asked Jimmie, a wistful look in her large eyes.

"No, not if you are a woman."

"Well, I'll still be a child with you, if I'm a woman with everyone else," she said, abruptly, after thinking for a moment.

"That's a sensible little girl!" exclaimed Talbot, gravely, kissing the little brown forehead as he spoke.

"And now, Dick," said Jimmie, suddenly, "can't I do anything to help you out of this awful hole?"

"I don't know, Jimmie," Talbot replied, thoughtfully. "This fellow will swear terribly hard against me. I can see that already. I think I can prove the difference that exists between Dick Talbot and Overland Kit, but Judge Jones is going to convict me if he can. If he can get public sentiment aroused against me here, and push the trial through on the evidence of this fellow, without giving me a chance for my life, I'm a gone man."

"But Dick, isn't there any friend who could help you?" the girl asked, anxiously.

"Yes, one!" cried Dick, a bright thought coming to him. "Let me whisper in your ear."

A lengthy communication it was that Dick whispered. Then Dick pressed another kiss upon the low forehead of the girl, and she hastened away, her heart beating high with hope.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 264.)

The Rival Brothers:

THE WRONGED WIFE'S HATE.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AWFUL MYSTERY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JUBILATE!

AND so there was a funeral at Black Monk's—a very quiet and retiring affair—and the county magistrates were all there, with condolences; and maneuvering mammas with marriageable daughters began building castles in the air for their Laura Matildas, as they inspected the broad lands of Black Monk's, and reflected on the widowed state of its master.

And in the family vault beneath Monkwood church there was another coffin, and the house in Belgrave square had crape on the door, and among the obituary notices in the *Times* there was one of Rosamond, Lady Landsdowne, who had died suddenly of congestion of the brain; and then it was all over, and the county magistrates went home, to eat, drink, and be merry, and the handsome and haughty lady of Black Monk's was out of the world and forgotten.

Among the gentlemen who had attended the funeral procession was Mr. Arthur Hazelwood, of Hazelwood. It had been a good deal of a trial to that human snail to crawl out of his shell; but Miss Forest, with her customary clear-headed foresight, had represented so strongly what society in general, and Lord Landsdowne in particular, required of him, that he had been morally dragged from his sanctum of ease, and turned out in the cold.

He had drawn forth his regrets in most gentlemanly fashion, and tried as much as in him lay to keep from yawning in church during the oration and burial service; and then he had shaken hands languidly and under protest with the people he knew, and gone home, and been exceedingly bored by it all. It would take at least six months of undisturbed repose to recover him fully from the shocks his delicate nature had lately undergone. There was the arrival of those two hoydenish girls from Canada—Shook Number One; there was the ungentelemanly and unbusinesslike flight of his secretary—Shook Number Two; there was the other flight of one of the girls—he was not quite sure which; and now here was this dismal burying, which had upset him most of all.

Mr. Hazelwood's nerves were in a shattered state as he sunk into an easy-chair next morning, and, wrapping his gorgeous dressing-gown around him, broke his first egg. It was half-past twelve; but Mr. Hazelwood had had some tea and toast in bed, so he was not quite starving, late as was his breakfast-hour. Miss Forest was there, in a dainty morning toilet, looking very fair and pretty, as she poured out his chocolate, and giving no sign outwardly of having ever loved, or suffered, or plotted, or done wrong.

"And so there were a great many at the funeral, Arthur?" she was saying. "Of course—I knew there would be; and just think how it would look if you, the nearest neighbor of all, stayed away. Was Senor Mendez there?"

"Ya-as," drawled her cousin; "and it strikes me I have seen that man somewhere before. His face looks familiar."

"So it does," said Una. "I have often thought so, too. He reminds me of Conway; but I suppose that is nothing but fancy. Was Mr. Schaffer there?"

"Oh, yes, and no end of people. Come in." This was in answer to a rap; and his valet made his appearance, bearing two cards on a salver.

"Senor Mendez and Mr. Schaffer," said Una, glancing at them. "Speak of the—You know the old proverb, Arthur. What can they want with you?"

"They want to bore me to death. It is the aim of all my friends," Mr. Hazelwood said, helplessly. "I suppose I must see them. Show them up, Louis; Una, another cup of chocolate."

Before Miss Forest had finished pouring out the chocolate, the two gentlemen were in the room; Senor Mendez with an unusually grave, not to say stern, face, and Mr. Schaffer looking rather puzzled and at a loss. Miss Forest, bowing distantly, was about to depart, when Senor Mendez interposed.

"Pardon, madam," he said, gravely, "but the business which brings me here this morning concerns you as well as Mr. Hazelwood. So you will have the goodness to favor us with your presence for a few moments."

Una flashed an alarmed glance at Paul Schaffer; but that gentleman's assuring look said as plainly as words:

"I know nothing about it, I assure you. It's all Greek to me."

Mr. Hazelwood, who had been beating the devil's tattoo with his spoon, dropped it and his jaw at the mention of the appalling word "business."

"Business!" he faintly echoed. "My dear fellow, you must be mistaken! What business can you possibly have with me?"

"A good deal, as you will find out presently," said Senor Mendez, helping himself to a chair and drawing off his gloves; "and we will proceed to it at once. Mr. Schaffer, there is a chair; pray be seated, Miss Forest. The matter may detain us some time."

But Miss Forest, standing by the window, looking out, chose to pay no heed to the invitation. She was watching a carriage driving up the avenue—the carriage of Lord Landsdowne. What could possibly be bringing him to Hazelwood?

"Mr. Arthur Hazelwood," Senor Mendez began, leaning forward and transfixing that bewildered gentleman with his dark, eagle eye, "may I ask how long it is since you inherited this estate?"

"Senor Mendez!" cried Miss Forest, facing suddenly and sharply round, "what business is that of yours?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Forest; my question was addressed to your cousin! Will you be kind enough to answer, Mr. Hazelwood?"

"It is nearly sixteen years ago," said Mr. Hazelwood, looking more and more helpless and bewildered.

"It was left by an uncle, was it not, to the next of kin?"

"Yes."

"Were you the next of kin?"

"Ya-as."

"Indeed! I fancied you had an elder brother, Conway. The estate fell to him, I should think—did it not?"

Una Forest fairly bounded, and stifled a cry in its birth, as she looked wildly at the speaker, but the obtuse Arthur was still "far wide."

"He was away—nobody knew where, and he has never been heard of since. He is probably dead long ago."

Senor Mendez rose from his chair, his commanding form drawn up to its fullest height.

"He is not dead, Mr. Arthur Hazelwood. He is alive and here to claim his own! I am Conway Hazelwood!"

The master of Hazelwood rose from his chair, white as a sheet, and perfectly speechless. There had been an exclamation from Paul Schaffer; and Una Forest stood grasping a chair, her lips apart, the eyes dilating. In silence they all stood, the two brothers confronting each other across the table.

"Yes, I am Conway Hazelwood," the *cic-devant* Cuban repeated; "and I come to demand an account of your stewardship, Arthur. Oh, you need not stare so! I can easily prove my identity! Look here—do you know this? You ought to, since it is some of your own handiwork!"

He lifted the clustering dark hair from his temple, and showed a long purple scar. Arthur gave a cry as he saw it.

"Conway! Can it indeed be you? How could I have been so?"

"Stupid! very true, but then you know, Arthur, you never could see very far into a millstone. I only wonder our bright-eyed, sharp-sighted little Una did not recognize me from the first!"

"I wonder at it now, myself," Una said, coming forward; "but we all thought you dead. Oh, Conway! What a surprise this is!"

"Isn't it? You're glad to see me, I suppose, Una?"

"You know I am," she said, holding out her hand; but the blue eyes shifted and fell in the old way, as she spoke. "Why did you not tell us long ago?"

"Because I always was and will be an oddity—I suppose! Well, Mr. Schaffer, you are staring very hard; what do you make of all this?"

"Upon my honor!" said Mr. Schaffer, in all candor, "I don't know what to make of it, unless you are privately rehearsing theatricals. It all seems exceedingly like it!"

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women players," quoted Mr. Conway Hazelwood. "Your part in the performance will come in presently! Well, Arthur, old boy, you are quite satisfied I am myself, and nobody else! Your brother Conway, and no ghost!"

"I cannot doubt it! But where in the world have you been all this time?"

"Never mind that! It is my time to ask questions now—yours may come by-and-by. Arthur, where is my daughter?"

"Your what?" gasped Mr. Arthur, aghast.

"My daughter! If you don't know Eve Hazelwood is my daughter, Una does. Una, where is she?"

"She your daughter! Then poor Eugene was right!"

"To be sure he was, as you knew many a day ago—as my father knew, and as the paper he left for her and her sister on his deathbed will prove. Dr. Lance told me about that—he told me then how Rosie was stolen when an infant, by a person or persons unknown. But Eve was not stolen—where is she—she may be glad to find a father?"

Paul Schaffer drew suddenly back, and then looked down.

"Conway, I am sorry—I am very sorry—but she is not here!"

"No! here! Where then is she?"

"That I cannot tell. You had better ask Mr. Schaffer!"

"What has Mr. Schaffer to do with it?"

"A great deal," said he, very boldly; "as poor Hazel Wood could testify if she were here."

"Where is she?"

"Hazel! sick, poor child! She has been very ill ever since Eve ran away. Perhaps I was a little severe with her, but it was for her good!"

"What had she done?"

"She was engaged to Mr. D'Arville—she gave him to understand she loved him, yet we saw her steal out to meet, by night, and by stealth, Mr. Schaffer in the grounds. The sight, and the words he heard, her perfidy confirmed by her own lips, drove D'Arville from the house. I reproached her next day, as I felt it my duty to do, and she ran away in a passion, and we have never seen her since."

Conway Hazelwood turned to Paul Schaffer.

"Is this true, Mr. Schaffer?"

"It is," he answered, unflinchingly.

"Did Eve Hazelwood hold nocturnal interviews with you in the grounds?"

"She did!"

"What was she to you?"

"My betrothed wife before we ever left Canada!"

"She must have been a most reckless flirt, then! How came she to be also engaged to Monsieur D'Arville?"

"It was only to win a foolish wager made with my cousin Kate. She never cared a jot for him; she told me so herself."

"I heard her," chimed in Una, "and so did Monsieur D'Arville and Hazel Wood."

"

SELECTED EPITAPHS.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Dear little George Erastus Jones.
His mortal life is ended;
No more will ring his infant tones—
No more his pants be mended.

'Tis done, and Henry Charles is dead
And gone from regions staid;
We'll never stroke his curly head—
No, no, not by a tinfal.

Farwell dear John, what joys of earth
Can now our sorrows soften?
No sin shall ever touch him more—
His soul went out a-coughin'.

Our Eddie's gone to join the band;
The ague sadly shook him;
The measles pestered him to death.
And then the mumps they took him.

Physicians four long time she bore,
But still they were in vain;
The contents of a druggist's store
Relieved her from her pain.

We miss his little form by day;
At night we miss his anthem;
Alas, that such a void should come
Through choleas infantum!

The chicken-pox it carried off
Our darling little Johnny,
And if he could come back to us
Oh, it would be so funny!

Beneath this stone my husband lies,
Augustus Henry Sollers,
I hope he's reached a happier sphere:
This stone cost twenty dollars.

Our little Jake has gone to rest;
Our love he did forsake;
We ne'er could put that child to sleep—
Now we can't get him awake.

Dear wife, farewell; it gives me peace
To know thou art at rest;
And enjoying yourself hugely
Among the high-class best.

LEAVES

From a Lawyer's Life.

BY A. GOULD PENN.

VI.—The Dumb Witness.

It was with great satisfaction that I viewed the success of my student, Lewis Ayres, when, after his probationary course of study in my office, he passed a creditable examination and was admitted to the bar.

Such was my regard for him, and my estimate of his abilities, that I at once installed him in my office as a partner, and changed the little swinging sign to read, "SMITH & AYRES, ATTORNEYS AT LAW."

There lived in our little city a merchant by the name of Harvey Benson, who began his business career as a peddler, and, by economy and shrewdness, had become the wealthiest merchant in the place, and with his rise in fortune he had imbibed somewhat that aristocratic feeling now so well known by the term "shoddy." This description of him must suffice for the present.

Finding Ayres seated at his desk, one day, apparently absorbed in a "brown study," I asked:

"What is the matter, Lewis?—got a tough question?"

"Yes, sir," he replied. "I will state it to you. Do you know young Charley Clair?"

"What, the clerk at Benson's store?"

"The same."

"Yes, I know him; not intimately, however. I believe he is a special friend of yours."

"Yes, sir, he is; and he is in a serious scrape and has called upon me to assist him."

"I believe I have heard something of it. You mean the money that Harvey Benson has lost?"

"Yes, and Charley is accused of being the thief, and is now under bail to answer to the charge."

"Rather a serious charge, I should say; but tell me all about it."

"Well, the facts are about like this: Charley has been with Benson about two years, working at a very small salary, and putting up with the old gentleman's fault-finding as best he could. But, to add to this, his fellow-clerk, young Davis, who is more of a favorite with the old man, has left no chance unimproved to kick at Charley, and it is mainly through his testimony that the supposed theft looks so bad for Clair."

"But, about the missing money?" I queried.

"A few days ago Benson came rushing into the store, all breathless with excitement, and saying that he had been robbed of a large amount of money, which he carried in a large red leather pocketbook. And the last recollection he had of seeing the pocketbook was the evening before, when he had taken it out in the counting-room to pay Charley Clair some money, and he went from there to his stables to look at a new horse he had bought that day, and must have left the pocketbook on the desk."

"Of course, Davis suggested that Charley knew all about it, but Charley denied any knowledge of the missing money. But Davis ascertained that Charley had been spending considerable money, and he has worked up a case that looks very bad for the poor boy."

"Ah, there goes Charley Clair now. Call him in, Lewis."

Low accordingly went to the door, and soon returned, followed by the young man.

On entering, Charley Clair shook hands with me, and in response to my inquiries, told me the story as Lewis Ayres had already related it.

"Tell me, Charley," I asked, "what reason Davis has for his enmity to you?"

A blush came to his cheek; but before he could answer, Lewis came to his aid.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Smith. Davis regards Charley as a rival, not only in business, but in the affections of Stella Benson, their employer's daughter."

So that was undoubtedly the incentive to the whole charge. And, as usual, a woman at the bottom of it!

I was very favorably impressed with the manner of young Clair. He had a frank and honest countenance, spoke with the air of an educated gentleman, and, withal, there was that about him calculated to win and attract friendship and command respect. I resolved to question him a little more.

"Who was present when Mr. Benson paid you this money in the counting-room?"

"No one, sir."

"How much did Mr. Benson pay you?"

"Only fifty dollars; my wages for the past month."

"Has Benson ever treated you with any suspicion before?"

"No, sir; only his treatment of me changed when he learned that I had been his daughter's escort to a concert."

"Did you ever talk with him concerning his daughter?"

"No, sir, but Davis told him that I was aspiring in that direction, and he favors Davis, because he is of a rich and influential family."

"But, how about the money Davis claims you have been spending lately?"

"I have been earning a little money by work, out of business hours, and thus accumulated about two hundred dollars, which I spent in buying some furniture and books for my own room at home."

"You live with your mother, I believe?"

"Yes, sir. I support my mother and sister with my wages, and it takes it all to do that," and his lips visibly quivered as he mentioned his mother and sister.

I asked no more questions, and after a short conversation with Lewis Ayres, Charley left the office.

"What do you think of it?" asked Ayres, after his friend had left.

"It looks bad," I replied; "the circumstantial evidence is against the young man, so far, particularly his having recently spent so much money since this loss. But I can not believe that a man of his honest appearance could be guilty of such a theft. He is certainly too smart to steal where every circumstance would point to him as the guilty one. I can not believe it. But, Lew, you work up the case and I will assist you all I can."

"Thank you, Mr. Smith, for your good opinion of my friend. I am sure your judgment is not at fault as to his honesty. I will see what can be done."

Charley Clair was disgraced in the opinion of a majority of the business people, and but few of his friends dared stand up and declare their faith in him. The facts were too plainly against him, and he was shunned as if possessed of a fatal contagion.

Harvey Benson, his employer, believing firmly in his guilt, and stung in his avaricious heart by the loss of a few hundreds, was most active in defaming and crushing down the poor boy.

And, besides, his high-toned sensibilities were terribly shocked by learning that this clerk—this low-born menial—had dared to intrude upon his household, and aspire to be the companion of his daughter. This last offense exceeded all.

A modestly dressed lady with her face heavily veiled entered my office, the day following my interview with young Clair, and requested a consultation with me.

I was alone—Ayres having gone out on business—and throwing aside her veil she revealed the face that I knew well—that of Stella Benson.

"Oh, Mr. Smith," she exclaimed, considerably agitated, "you know my errand here?"

"It concerns Mr. Clair, I suppose."

"Exactly. Tell me all. What are his chances of averting the terrible fate?"

"I am sorry to say, Miss Benson, that a fearful array of facts appears against him, but, what the result will be I cannot guess. We can only do our best."

"Do so, Mr. Smith; leave nothing undone to serve him; I will reward you myself."

"Thanks, Miss Benson, for your offer, but my partner, Lewis Ayres, has the matter in charge, and, rest assured, all will be done that can be to save Mr. Clair from this charge of which we believe him to be entirely innocent."

"I thank you for your sympathy in his behalf, Mr. Smith. When does his trial take place?"

"Day after to-morrow," I answered.

Drawing her heavy veil again over her face, she hurried from the office.

Thus it was evident to me that the proud merchant's daughter loved his poor, disgraced clerk, and believed him innocent.

Ah! if Charley Clair could but know all I then knew his despondency would give way to joy unutterable, for had I not seen that he equally loved this peerless young woman?

But the great issue of guilt or innocence was yet to come, with guilt in the ascendant.

The day of trial came, and Charley Clair walked into court, looking pale, but with an ease of manner that would have ill become a guilty man.

My young partner was despondent. This was his first important case, and he could see no chance for a triumph. His own reputation was at stake as well as that of his client, and I was equally concerned.

"Guilty or not guilty?" was the question asked, after the indictment had been duly read.

"Not Guilty," came in a firm tone from the prisoner.

I saw the sneers and exchange of glances between Harvey Benson and his clerk Davis, who arrived just in time to hear Charley's answer; and I noticed, among other ladies in attendance, the veiled figure that had called upon me in my office.

But no one else knew of those bright eyes that peeped from behind the envious veil.

Such a trial could not fail to draw a crowd of people, some eager to hear the cunningly devised story that was to fasten a great crime on an innocent man, and a few hoping that his innocence might be made apparent.

The opening statement of counsel for the prosecution was soon made, and, trembling in every limb, Lewis Ayres arose to make the statement for defense.

Growing calmer, as he proceeded, he held the crowded masses spellbound by his simple but eloquent words.

"Charles Clair stands before you an innocent man," were the concluding words of his speech, and casting a glance of withering scorn at the merchant and his cringing clerk he sat down, amid profound silence.

Scarcely had the last words died on his lips ere a black shaggy mass sprang out from the crowded aisle, and old Ranger, Harvey Benson's great Newfoundland dog, crouched at his master's feet, and dropped from his great mouth a leather packet.

Amazed, the merchant took it up and beheld the lost pocketbook!

To open it and display the roll of bills it contained was but the work of a moment, and, hastily counting over the notes, he looked up, with a new light beaming in his eyes, and as one in a stupor said:

"The lost is found!"

Another witness now appeared in the person of his servant, who had followed the dog as fast as his frightened wits would allow.

"How is this, John," demanded Benson; "how came old Ranger with this pocketbook?"

"Please, sir," began John, nervously turning his hat in his hands, "old Ranger broke his chain, sir, and snuffing around in the straw he uncovered this pocketbook and started after you at the store. I followed to see what he had; but, not finding you at the store, sir, he tracked you here, sir, and—there's your lost pocketbook, sir."

From a grin of pleasure at John's comical air, the spectators arose to a shout of approbation, and with difficulty order was restored.

"Charles Clair, give me your hand," said Benson, as a full comprehension of the facts dawned upon him. "I have accused you wrongfully, and I now ask your forgiveness."

"You are freely forgiven," was all that poor Charley could say, and the strain on his nerves gave way and he sunk into his seat, weeping for joy.

I need add but little more by way of sequel.

Davis, the vindictive rival of Charley, found it more to his taste to secure a situation in a neighboring city.

Harvey Benson so far overcame his social scruples as to admit Charley Clair to membership in his family, as the husband of Stella, and, eventually, as a member of his business firm.

My partner, Lewis Ayres, declares his first case gave him more fame as a prophet than as a lawyer.

Helen's May-Basket;

OR,

THE MOSS-AGATE BUTTON.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

A soft May sunset illumined the fragrant air with a glow of golden beauty. The first May sun—the crowning day of the young spring queen, when she bends her fair brow to receive its garland of triumph.

At her window, with little white hands idle in her lap, sat Helen Ray, watching the sunset, and enjoying the balmy breath of spring, and—who knows?—perhaps dreaming sweet maiden dreams.

Gazing at the golden glory of the west, she sat until it faded to an amber glow, then deepened into the pearly gray of early twilight; and as it grew dim, the young May moon rose softly bright, and smiled serenely upon the fresh world.

Ting-a-ling! ting-a-ling-ling! went the front door-bell, breaking the spell of Helen's reverie. She rose and obeyed the summons herself—no one was there.

Wondering, she turned away, and, in turning, her careless foot struck some object on the doorstep. She glanced downward—then stooped, and raised with quick hands a lovely May-basket, rich with a wealth of delicate bloom.

Waxen, fragrant hyacinth bells, violet velvet clusters of heart's-ease, pink and white perfumed rosebuds, dainty trailing vines and sprays of rose-geranium, and in the center a lovely half-open mossrose, breathed the sweet breath to her grateful senses as she bent over them.

"Oh, how sweet! Who could have sent them?" cried Helen, as she bore her treasure into the parlor, and hastily lit the gas to have a closer view.

Attached to the pretty rustic basket was a tiny card bearing her name, but the writing was in a hand she did not know, and gave her no clue to the donor of her fragrant gift.

"What wouldn't I give to know!" breathed Helen, a flush, pink as if reflected from the hearts of her roses, staining her fair cheek.

"Let me see; roses, violets, hyacinths, rose-geranium and the 'red mossrose'—did he mean, whoever he is, to say that he cared for me?" And the blushes on Helen's face deepened, even though she was all alone.

"I wish I knew who he was. I believe I could love almost anybody, if I knew he really loved me," sighed Helen; and the thought came from her inmost heart, for though she was the daughter of wealth, the pet and idol of her father's home, she had neither mother, brother nor sister, and knew many lonely hours, wherein she longed for the love and companionship in which youth delights.

Bending once again to inhale the sweetness of her fairy gift, something brighter than a flower or a dewdrop caught the gleam of the gaslight, and flashed into her eyes. With swift fingers she parted the blossoms, and drew out a moss-agate sleeve-button set in a heavy band of gold—a gentleman's button, which must have fallen from his wrist while his hand was arranging the dainty nest of flowers.

Eagerly Helen looked it over, but there was no name anywhere upon it—no token to tell who was its owner.

"Never mind," said Helen; "it is a clue, and I mean to watch till I find the mate to it. I hope it will be a good while before he gets near set. And I hope—oh, I do hope, he will prove a man worth loving."

Two or three gentlemen called that very evening, for, with her wealth and beauty, Helen could not fail to be popular, and true to her resolve, she observed them closely, but none of them wore a moss-agate button.

And in her heart Helen was glad of it, for though they were pleasant fellows enough, none of them were her favorites.

The next evening she went to a party, and met a large number of gentlemen, but here, too, her search was fruitless.

"Why, who can it be?" she thought. "Nearly all the gentlemen I know were there to-night, and I observed every one of them. Let's see, who was not there? Lester St. John wasn't—but oh, it's not he, I hope! I could never love him, for all his money and grand family. Carry Gray wasn't, oh, dear! he's forty, and has a glass eye! For pity's sake, not that person. Harry Willis wasn't there; he's a true gentleman—a noble fellow—but then he never pays a lady any attentions; it can't be Harry. Lem Green—Paris Conner—they are 'fast' fellows; I wouldn't have anything to do with them. There, that's all I can think of, and I haven't given a guess. Never mind; I'll find out some day, if I wait and watch."

A week or so later Mr. Harry Willis dropped in for a call, one evening. Helen was a little surprised, for it was a rare thing for him to call. She wished sometimes he would come oftener—he was so pleasant and gentlemanly.

But his sister Emma and Helen were very intimate friends, and he came this evening on an errand for her—a piece of music which she wanted Helen to learn to play with her.

Helen, at Harry's request, sat down to play it over, while he stood beside her to turn the music.

As he reached out his hand to turn the sheet, his white linen cuff was exposed for a moment, and Helen saw the mate to her moss-agate sleeve-button!

In the instant of surprise her fingers fell with a discordant crash upon the keys, but she quickly recovered herself, and played steadily on to the end.

When she left the piano, she had resolved to make one bold stroke to end her doubts and fears together.

"Mr. Willis," she said, fixing her eyes on Harry's wrist, as his hand lay on the center-table, "that is a pretty sleeve-button you wear. May I look at it closer?"

Harry held out the button instantly.

"It is the only one I have of the kind," he said smiling, "for I was so unfortunate as to lose the other one, not long ago. But I was so attached to them, I continue to wear this one without a mate."

"Were they a gift, that you prize them so highly?" asked Helen.

"Yes. The last gift my mother made me before her death. I was very sorry indeed that I lost it."

Now if Harry had not made this little explanation, I doubt if Helen would have said any more. As it was, she quietly asked:

"Had you no idea where you lost it?"

"Not the least. I would give a great deal to know."

Helen hesitated, and her fair cheek reddened; but she left her chair, opened a little casket which stood on a pretty rustic stand, and, turning to Harry's side, dropped into his hand the missing button!

"Why, Miss Helen! How I thank you! Where did you find this?" cried Harry, eagerly.

Helen hesitated again, but some impulse prompted her to tell the whole truth, while her fair face flushed deeper beneath Harry's earnest eye.

"Somebody," she said, "was so kind as to bring me a lovely May-basket, and I found the button among the flowers."

It was Harry Willis' turn to color now.

"Miss Helen, you guess, then, who dared presume so much?"

"I do now."

Helen's low voice was not steadier than his own. Perhaps that gave him courage to go on.

"Do you know why I ventured so far?" he asked.

"How can I, unless you tell me?"

"I will tell you," Harry took the light hand which lay on the arm of the chair in both his own, and bent nearer as he went on. "Because, Miss Helen, I have dared, for a long time, to do something more. I dared to love you, Helen! Was it too much? Do you think you could ever care for me?"

For a moment Helen Ray was silent. Then she raised her eyes, clear, true, dark eyes that they were, to Harry's face, and said, in a low, firm tone:

"Mr. Willis, I will tell you the truth. I did not dream that you loved me, and I don't know that I have, before to-night, especially thought that I loved you. But I have been very lonely, and longed for some one to love, and to love me. And when I read the message of the May-basket, I thought perhaps the one who sent it did love me, and I vowed if I ever found him, and he was a worthy man, I would love him. And now—"

"What now, dear Helen?" asked Harry, eagerly, as she paused.

"I—I am glad to know it was you, Mr. Willis."

Harry passed his strong young arm around her, and drew her to his side, as he said, gently, "Do you think you can love me, Helen?"

And Helen trustfully dropped her bright head on his broad shoulder, as she answered honestly: "I know I can."

And I know she did, for when May came round again, Helen was a happy bride, and her friend, Emma Willis, was her sister, while her husband's choicest bridal gift was a second lovely May-basket, glorious with a wealth of bloom, beauty and perfume.

My City Friends.

BY FRANK DAVES.

It was a wonderful event when Annie and I were married. It seemed to me that the whole world and the biggest half of Upper Canada had turned over. The trees looked greener, the flowers looked brighter, the sky bluer, and all that, and all that; and we felt that we were "the observed of all observers," and were supremely happy.

We bought a little place out of town, consisting of a two-acre plantation, with a frog pond at the lower end, and a house about ten by twenty, with an attic. An onion bed ornamented the back yard, while a cherry tree and a rose bush did duty in the front. We also had a small patch of strawberries down near the frog pond, which, however, never bore any fruit. So much for the situation.

When we left the city, we shook hands with all our friends, and received their congratulations, and were abundantly assured that they would "drop down and pass a few weeks with us during strawberry time, just by way of change, you know, and to see your situation."

All this was very nice; for there is nothing sweeter than to know that you have the friendship of a large circle of intellectual beings, like the Smiths, and Joneses, and Jenkines, and Blacks.

My pretty little wife was delighted when she saw the place. We had a servant girl who skimmed with the household duties; and I came home from the city every evening by the train, and we would then sit in the front yard, under our cherry tree, and sniff the sweet perfume arising from our rosebush and listen to the silvery-toned frogs, as they deposited themselves in the pond at the rear end of the lot. We were very happy at such times, and would talk sentiment and granger by the hour.

"How sweet is life!" said the partner of my bosom.

"You better reckon so," said I.

"Jerry," said she, "we are the blessed of God."

"Do you think so, love?"

"Yes."

At this juncture she put in a kiss by way of emphasis, or period, or because she couldn't think of anything else, I don't know which. At any rate, she kissed me, and continued:

"Those insects in yonder pool sing musical-ly."

"Them's frogs," said I.

"Hush," said she, reverentially; "listen to the heaven-blessed warblers of night, as they chant their evening hymns."

"I tell you, Ann, them's nothing but frogs," said I.

"And I agree with you, my dear friend Butler," said a manly voice at the gate.

I sprang up and admitted Boggs—Boggs the elegant—Boggs the wealthy—Boggs the epicure.

"Boggs, how do you do?"

"Well, entirely so, and how is Butler, and Mrs. Butler?"

I assured him that we were enjoying life to its utmost extent, at which he expressed the great satisfaction that I know he felt.

Tea was nearly ready, and we three sat in our little parlor, chatting pleasantly, when the stern voice of some one was heard at the gate, expostulating with a driver of some sort of vehicle.

It was the manly voice of Grymes, our minister in the city.

I rushed to the gate. I clasped Grymes to my bosom. Mrs. Grymes was hanging on his arm; but I did not clasp her. No, nor I didn't clasp Jerry, nor Ezekiel, nor Elihu, nor Phoebe, nor Henry Ward, nor Demetrius, nor the twins. They were all Grymeses, but I contented myself with clasping the head of the family, and a hearty shake all round.

"I was forced to take a vacation," said the

reverend gentleman, "and I thought that I would run down and spend a month with you, and enjoy the peace and quiet of country life."

"Here you is!" yelled a rough voice, and I recognized the familiar tones of another driver, and in a minute, two of my brothers-in-law, with their wives and dear little ones, appeared at the door.

My dear Annie flew to greet them. I felt happy. I had now over a dozen guests on my hands, with poor accommodations; and all of them, praying us to take no trouble with them, but merely give them milk, biscuit, and the fruits of the earth. Strawberries was the article most in demand; likewise milk. Now, we purchased strawberries in the city, and I carried them home in a basket; and we bought our milk of Hoskins